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THE FOLLOWERS OF THE LORD.

THE
Followers of the Lord :

STORIES FOR CHILDREN

FROM

Church History.

BY THE

REV. J. M. NEALE, M.A.,
WARDEN OF SACKVILLE COLLEGE.

Second Edition.

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TO THE FIRST EDITION.

A
THE design of this little book is to supply a want which must often, I think, have been felt by parents—that of some appropriate reading which they may put into the hands of their children for Holy Week. Such, I mean, as may not weary their minds by dwelling too entirely and exclusively on our LORD's Passion; nor yet, on the other hand, be absolutely unconnected with it. It seemed to me that stories from Church History might answer such a purpose; that the Passions of the servants may recall that of the Master, while yet, in variety of circumstance and interest, they do so without fatiguing, through too long

7-17-63

meditation on one subject, the mind of a child.

The *Martyrdom of S. Ketevan* has never before been given from the original sources, in English, (nor, I believe, in any European language.) Baronius, indeed, published an inaccurate account from the letters of the Latin Friars who were present; others, as Pietro della Valle, did the same. But my story is from a much more genuine source. M. Brosset, the distinguished Georgian scholar, was kind enough to translate for me, from the original, the history of the Martyrdom of this illustrious Queen, as written by Theimouraz, sixth in descent from her, who had, of course, access to all documents connected with the subject.

The story of the *Priest at the Outpost* is related in some of the Dutch Ecclesiastical Histories. I think, but will not be sure, that a similar account is given of a Protestant preacher in Uytenbogaert's *Kerkeliicke Historie*.

The *Præfect's Vision* is narrated by Sozomen, H. E. vi. 2.

The *Tunny Fishers* is founded on fact, though where I have read the story I cannot now remember.

The Martyrdom of the *Theban Legion* is from the *Acta Sincera*.

The *Mountain Lights* is one of the many beautiful legends related of S. Majolus by Nalgod, Aldebald, and others.

The *Signals of Rhosilly* was written after a visit to the *Worm's Head*; but the facts related occurred in the wild west of Pembrokeshire.

The *Battle of Aquileia* is from the Ecclesiastical Histories of Sozomen (vii. 28) and Socrates (v. 25.)

The *Dream of Troilus* is related by Leontius in his Life of S. John the Almoner.

SACKVILLE COLLEGE,
March 17, 1851.

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THE
FOLLOWERS OF THE LORD.

Palm Sunday.

**THE MARTYRDOM OF S. KETEVAN, QUEEN
OF CACHETIA.**

SEPTEMBER 12, 1624.



LET us go out into the garden, this fine spring evening, and I will tell you the first of my stories about those happy Saints, who followed our LORD in His Passion, and rest now with Him in His glory. There: the old holly-hedge will shelter us, while we sit down and try for a little while to fancy to ourselves how they followed Him here: for who shall tell us what it is to follow the LAMB whithersoever He goeth, there?

When you grow a little older, you will read of a certain king of Persia, called Shah Abbas, who lived at the beginning of the seventeenth century. He was one of the mighty men of this world : he increased his kingdom exceedingly ; he kept up large armies ; he overran many beautiful countries ; he gained many victories. And he was one of the wise men of this world, too : he made several prudent laws ; he encouraged merchants to settle in Persia ; he added to his own riches, and to those of his people : among other things, he entered into a treaty with Queen Elizabeth. In short, he has left behind him a name famous in history : and its writers generally call him, Shah Abbas *the Great*.

On the other hand, the queen of whom I am going to tell you, who was one of the many sovereigns delivered into his hand, has left no name behind her on earth. You might go to many and many an one of those who have studied history, and ask them if they ever heard of Ketevan, Queen of Cachetia, and you would, I dare say, have the same answer from all. And yet this Shah Abbas, who is called the Great, was in truth a murderer, a cruel

tyrant and persecutor, a very monster of wickedness; and S. Ketevan's name has long ago been written in the Book of Life, for that she obtained the Martyr's Crown as nobly, perhaps, as any of those soldiers of the LORD who have received grace to resist unto blood. And it will not be unfitting that, on this day, when He Who was the Martyr of Martyrs, was also pleased to enter the Holy City as a king, I should tell you of one who, after she had worn an earthly crown, changed it for the everlasting diadem of glory.

You know that Georgia is that country which lies partly in Asia, partly in Europe, between the Black and the Caspian Seas. The Gospel was first preached there by a poor slave named Nonna, about three hundred and fifty years after our LORD's Birth. And from that time to this, through many cruel persecutions, the Georgians have held fast to the faith. At first they were persecuted by the fire-worshippers; then by the Mahometans, both Turks and Persians: for they lay just on the borders of these two great empires. Sometimes it pleased God to raise up a warrior king, such

as S. David III. who gave peace to his country ; but oftener it seemed good to Him that the faith of that land should be made perfect by suffering. At the time of which I am writing Georgia was divided into three kingdoms, Imeretia, Kartalena, and Cachetia.

The muezzins in all the mosques of Shiraz, then the capital of Persia, were thundering out their summons from the minarets, "Come to prayer ! Come to prayer ! There is no God but God, and Mahomet is the Prophet of God ! There is no God but God, and Ali is next to his Prophet !" It was a fine September morning ; the sun was just rising behind the vast plain, the desert of Kirman, that lies to the east of Shiraz ; and the bright blue sky promised a very sultry day. But as yet, in the avenue of limes at the south of the city, the wind was pleasantly cool ; the leaves were putting on their glorious autumn colours ; some of the trees blazed with gold ; some were red, as the sunset cloud of a stormy evening ; some arrayed themselves in a dark ochre-like tint. And the birds sang sweetly among them ; and sometimes, from the shadier recesses of a

grove hard by, you might catch the deep delicious notes of the *bulbul*, the Persian nightingale. But turn to the north, and high on the dome of many a mosque glittered the accursed crescent; and still the thunder of the muezzins rang out, "Come to prayer! Come to prayer! There is no God but God, and Ali is next to Mahomet!"

Suddenly a young Georgian, for such you might know him to be by his tight-fitting cloak, particoloured itself, and laced in front by particoloured ribbons, came into the avenue. Several times he paced backwards and forwards, hurriedly and distractedly; and ever and anon turned his eye to the sun, as if he were impatiently waiting for something about to happen.

"Ah! Louarsab! is that you?" cried an elderly man, as they met at one end of the avenue. "How goes it, I pray you?"

"All doubt is over," said the other. "The queen must either acknowledge Mahomet, or die to-day."

"Then God give her grace," said the Persian, for such he was; "God give her grace

by the Cross to attain to the Crown! But are you sure?"

"Most certain," replied Louarsab. "A messenger arrived this morning from Shah Abbas, leaving the governor no choice."

"And how does she die?" inquired the other, whose name was Sadi.

"It is left to Khanghar-khan, but it is to be by torments."

"What!" cried Sadi, "a queen, and the wife and mother of kings! God forbid!"

"It is even so," said Louarsab. "Oh, if there be a punishment exceeding others hereafter for them that persecute the faith, it must be the Shah's!"

"And God grant that the crown laid up for the queen may be equally bright! But how she could trust herself to such a monster, —there is the wonder to me!"

"And it well may be. But her son, King Theimouraz, desired above all things to be at peace with the Shah. So that when the Persian sent first for his eldest son, and then for his second, he did not refuse them as hostages. And then the great men of his kingdom

prayed him also to send his mother, as yet another proof that they did really desire peace with Persia."

"And did no one see that it was but a device of the Shah's to get them into his own power?"

"The king suspected it, but he was overpowered; Queen Ketevan knew it, but she was ready to sacrifice herself for the good of her people. And a long and weary ten years' imprisonment has she borne, separated from her grandsons, who are in another prison, at a distance from her country, hoping vainly to see her home again!"

"And does she know what she is called to suffer?"

"Not yet. I myself am to announce it to the Priest Heraclius, almost the only comforter they have left her. The gates of the castle are not opened till an hour after sunrise: as soon as they are, I must see him."

"It is drawing onward to that," said Sadi. "Had you not better be walking hither?"

"I will. Will you also come?"

"Most surely." And the two friends bent

their course into the town. The castle, a new, strong, square building, stood nearly in its centre: it was not large; and its small windows and battlements were not altogether so unlike an European castle. For Shah Abbas imitated that kind of fortress; of which there are many in the mountains of Armenia.

In front of this was an open space, where the markets were held; and again, on the opposite side of that, a large *caravanserai*, or resting-place for travellers, with the low sheds that surrounded its quadrangle, and the gates that led in thither.

At length the grating sound of the withdrawal of the bolts was heard, and the gates of the castle were slowly opened.

"I have an order from the governor," said Louarsab, stepping forward, "of admittance to the queen."

"Show it," said the porter, "and wait here till I return."

He presently came back, and saying, "Follow me," led the two friends into a kind of long, low, narrow hall, that opened off from the passage of entrance.

"The queen," said their conductor, "will let you know when she can receive you." And he was about to leave them, when Louarsab, putting five piastres into his hand, said, "I will pray you first to let the Priest Heraclius know that I desire to see him alone."

"Your pleasure shall be done," replied the porter; and in about five minutes the good old Priest entered the room. A venerable looking man he was; with a bright, kind eye, a silver beard that reached half way to his waist, and a face which, if worn by care and anxiety, had yet a sweet though somewhat mournful smile of welcome. His dark grey cassock was almost threadbare, but it was more reverend in the eyes of Louarsab than the most gorgeous priestly vestment; for he knew how good, and true, and pure, was the heart that it covered,—how good to the needy and afflicted,—how true to the Catholic faith,—how pure in its love to God.

"So you are come, my son," said Heraclius, when he had, after the custom of his Church, given his blessing to Louarsab. "And what are your tidings?"

"Would to God I had not to tell them!" cried Louarsab.

"What! are they what the world calls evil?" asked Heraclius. "Well, well, they shall turn to good; tell me what they are."

"A messenger came late last night from the Shah, my father."

"We have been expecting him," returned Heraclius, as the other paused.

"But scarcely his tidings, my father. The queen must renounce CHRIST, or—"

"Or must suffer for Him? His will be done! and His Name be praised that there is no doubt as to her choice. But when, I pray you?"

"Even this very day."

"So soon! Then shall she spend a more glorious evening than we. But at what hour?"

"The Khan will be here anon. But that is not all; there is sadder news behind."

"What!" cried Heraclius: "call you this sad, that a prisoner and an exile, sorely troubled and surrounded with many enemies, should be called home? Then do we not

count them happy that endure. But what, I pray you, is this new affliction?"

"All deaths are not equally bitter, my father," said Louarsab, after a pause.

"And which have they chosen for her?"

"I know not; but it is to be by tortures. The orders of the Shah were express; and he has even sent two executioners from Teheran, who are well skilled in their accursed art."

"This," cried the Priest, "did I not indeed look for! I would earnestly have prayed that this cup might pass away; now I may but pray that as her sufferings abound, so her glory in CHRIST may abound also. But I must bid you farewell, for the time waxes very short. We shall meet again."

"Ay, good father, even at the place; we will assist her with our prayers to the last. Meanwhile, God speed you and strengthen her!"

"Amen!" said the Priest; and leaving the hall, he proceeded up the strong, stone staircase that led to the apartments where the queen was confined. Let us go before him.

By the open window of her prison sat Kete-

van, gazing earnestly on the plain of Shiraz, then arraying itself in all the beauty of the autumn morning. Her age was about forty-five, and in her youth she had been very lovely. Even now you might see traces of her former beauty in the tall, commanding form ; the mournful and somewhat stern expression of countenance ; the long hair, grey rather with sorrow than with age ; and the full, dark eye. There are many pictures of her in the churches of Georgia : and, notwithstanding the unskilfulness of the artists, we can see that she must have merited the title of her girlhood, —*the Pearl of Cachetia*.

On a low stool by her side sat the daughter of one of the *Thawards*, or nobles of Georgia. They had been talking of their own dear country, from which they had now been parted so long ; and the tears were standing in the eyes of Tamar, (for that was the name of the Georgian maiden,) but not in those of the queen.

“No, Tamar,” she was saying, “something tells me that I shall never behold it more. I never looked to return ; and if it pleases God

that I am called to resist unto blood, I know well that the heavenly paradise is a better home than Tiflis,—even though that be called the earthly one,” she added, with a smile.

“My dear, dear mistress, do not talk so,” cried Tamar, bursting into tears; “we shall surely return. God will not suffer this cruel tyrant to oppress you for ever.”

“For ever? God be praised, no! but to the end of my sojourn here. And it is not so, Tamar, that our fathers have taught us to speak of the Crown of Martyrdom. What! have I not heard you yourself, dear one, envy the grace which God bestowed on our own blessed S. Susanna?”*

“I have, and I do,” replied Tamar; “but it seems so different now,—now when I look upon you, and know not how soon you may be called to the same conflict.”

“He ever liveth to make intercession for us, Tamar; there is our strength. Hark! I thought I heard Father Heraclius’ step on the

* S. Susanna, wife of the governor of Ran, suffered with countless other martyrs in the fierce persecution of Meruan, about A.D. 750.

stairs, and some one is knocking: Open the door, and see."

"Lady," said Heraclius, after a few words had been spoken on both sides, "I bring you the happiest tidings that you have ever yet heard, albeit they will not be pleasing to flesh and blood."

"Then I am called to suffer for CHRIST's Name?" said the queen.

"He has counted you worthy of so great an honour," replied the Priest; "how great, who shall dare to say, save those blessed ones that stand around the throne?—so great, that He has no higher to bestow; so great, that His Church has nothing more glorious to celebrate."

"And when, my father?" asked Ketevan, with a voice as firm as if she had been speaking of some common matter of life.

"Even this very day. Nay, my daughter,"—for Tamar was weeping bitterly,—"*are these tears for us, or for her? If for her, do you grudge her entrance into the joy of her LORD? Do you grieve that she—one short suffering over—shall suffer no more, and sin no more? In old time it was not thus that the friends of*

the Martyrs went with them to their confession."

"Our good father speaks well, Tamar," said Queen Ketevan. "I am going to see Him Whose I am, and Whom I serve; Him from Whom my enemies cannot separate me, no not for one moment. I am going to suffer for Him That suffered for me; to die for Him That died for me. All my sorrow now is that I must leave you; but you will be with Him also."

"Whether we live," said Heraclius, "'we live unto the LORD; or whether we die, we die unto the LORD: living, therefore, or dying, we are the LORD's.' But they that die to Him, and still more they that die for Him, have the more blessed portion."

"But tell me," said Ketevan, "by what means I am to go home to see Him."

Heraclius hesitated. "I know not," he said, at length; "this only I know, that it will not be by an easy road. But take comfort, my daughter;" (for the queen turned rather pale;) "it cannot be so rough a path as He trod Himself. And be it what it may, it will be a blessed journey that ends in Him."

"It will, it will, indeed!" replied the queen. "But," she added, with a half smile, "I have but a woman's heart, and I shrink from torture more than from death. But now, dear Tamar, since the time is so short, you shall go up to your own little turret; for I would fain be with our good father alone."

It was about two o'clock on the same day. The square in front of the castle was crowded with a vast multitude. The roofs of the houses,—every near wall,—the top of the caravanserai sheds, all were alive with men. They clung perilously on over the dome of the mosque *El Sahadie*; two or three—look up, and you will see them!—are even hanging on to the crescent at its summit. It is with the greatest difficulty that a passage from the prison is kept clear by the Kurdistan guards, the flower of the forces of Shah Abbas. Three deep on each side, they reach from the castle gate to a plot staked out in the midst of the square. Round this benches are placed for the spectators of the highest rank; and they, under the fierce beams of the afternoon sun, closely crowded together, are waiting in eager

expectation of the event. But in the centre of the arena,—the theatre for the great approaching contest between a weak woman and the terrors of a horrible death,—a fire had been kindled in early morning; and four executioners, masked, and each wearing a tightly-fitting dress of leather, moved slowly around it. Sometimes they raked backwards and forwards in the ashes what seemed crooked pieces of red hot iron; sometimes they attended to certain vessels of boiling liquid that hung over the fire; and then they would say a few words to each other in a low voice, and again busy themselves in their preparations.

“She will never stand the sight of this,” said a tall, noble-looking man, who occupied a front bench, to his neighbour.

“I know not that,” he replied; “I have read strange things of the constancy, as they call it, of these Nazarenes. But we shall soon know; it must be very near the time.”

“Ay,” said the other, “and Khanghar-khan is punctual. How intensely hot! and the rabble pressing in behind shuts out every chance of air.”

"We ought not to talk of heat either," replied his friend, "with that sight before us."

"Poor, miserable wretch! from torments on earth to torments in hell! What a desperate crowd! and how it thickens every moment!"

So they talked. At a little distance from them stood three Latin friars, missionaries in that country. They, too, came to be witnesses of God's grace, and to prepare themselves for what might be their own fate at any moment. You have heard something, and will hear more, of the unhappy differences, which separate the Latin and Greek Churches; and therefore it is to the eternal honour of these Priests, that, when they heard of the queen's sentence, they waited on Khanghar-khan, and offered him twenty thousand roubles, which they promised to collect in Europe, for her life. They were driven away with many an insult, and now they could only pray for her. And so they stood awaiting the issue, and comparing the scene with the old martyrdoms on which the Church loves to dwell, on the days of S. Agnes, and S. Margaret, and S. Lucy; and they besought God that it might now be shown how

His Arm was not shortened that it could not save, neither His Ear heavy that it could not hear.

A flourish of trumpets, long, loud, and thrilling. Escorted by a small troop of horse, and forcing his way through the crowd with difficulty, Khanghar-khan rode forward to a place left for him by the stakes. His beautiful Arab horse tossed his head proudly, and flecked his sides with foam, as the governor checked him and dismounted. After slightly and haughtily acknowledging the reverences paid him by those around, he took the seat prepared for him ; and almost at the same moment the castle gates opened.

Every eye was turned on those who issued forth. First came six of the Kurdistan guards, then the Priest Heraclius, and the Queen leaning on his arm. The Priest looked firmly and boldly around him, as if once more defying him whom he had so often before defied, Satan and all his armies. Ketevan wore a long white Louristan veil ; her eyes were fixed on the ground ; and Louarsab and Sadi, who followed close behind, could see that her hand

trembled as it rested on the Priest's arm. Last in the procession of death were six more guards; and when these had passed out, the gates of the castle closed again with a mournful clang.

Not a word was spoken by the Christians as they advanced to the little square; the vast multitude seemed almost to hold their breath, such a deep dead silence fell on market-place, roofs, and cupola.

"Queen Ketevan," said Khanghar-khan, in a harsh, unfeeling voice, "the answers you have heretofore so often given, as by word of mouth, so also by letter, to the king of kings, the brother of the sun and moon, the ever-victorious Shah Abbas, might well be counted sufficient to show your obstinacy, and to leave no place for further questioning. But such is the serene clemency of that most excellent and gracious prince, that he yet once more demands of you, by my mouth, whether you will leave the accursed superstition of your forefathers, in which case he will promote you to the highest honours of his kingdom,—or whether you are content to abide such tortures as his just vengeance shall decree in the case of your refusal?"

"I might well ask," said Ketevan, "by what right I, a sovereign princess, have been now for so many years shut up in prison, and am here threatened with judgment and execution? How many times your master has broken his word to me, God knows; very heartily I forgive him for all. And the rather that this his last act, cruel though it may seem, will indeed be his kindest."

"I did not," said Khanghar-khan, "come to thee to hear insults heaped on the great king. I will, therefore, pray you to answer my question by yea or nay. I ask once, but I will ask no more."

"Then, by God's grace," said Ketevan, "you cannot inflict so much on me for your hatred to my dear LORD, as I am willing to bear for His love."

"Then let the executioners see to it," replied Khanghar-khan; "for I have done."

"Now, my daughter," said Heraclius, in a low voice, "look wholly to Him; think only of Him; He is able to bring you through: He will bring you through; but take not your thoughts off Him for one moment, lest Satan

should win the advantage over you." And as two of them laid hands on her, and proceeded to despoil her of her robes, he said, "Even thus you are more like Him, my daughter; He has gone the very selfsame road. Think that He Himself is looking down upon you; think what great honour He will reap in your victory; think of the vast number of angels and saints that stand round you like a cloud, eager that you may be among them."

"I do, I do believe it, my father!" said Ketevan; "but O now pray for me!" For the other two executioners were raking from the fire a vast quantity of red hot nails, and arranging them on the sand, so as to form a kind of bed. Heraclius and the two Christians knelt; so also did the Latin friars without the palisade. And no doubt the SON of God was then, as of old time for S. Stephen, *standing* at the Right Hand of the FATHER; no doubt He was then filling her soul with courage, as surely as He was preparing to wipe away all tears from her eyes.

The four torturers approached, and raised the queen in their arms. The multitude

struggled and strained to press nearer; the thick oaken palisades quivered; those who were nearest kept their eyes intently fixed on the Martyr, waiting to see how she would endure the first touch of the fiery trial that was to try her. Only Louarsab and Sadi covered their faces with their hands; while Heraclius, though he would, like them, have shrunk from that sight, watched every expression that passed over the queen's face, that he might, if needs were, speak, or be silently instant in prayer.

"Now then," said one of the men: "all together!" And they laid Ketevan down on the fiery bed. The crowd had expected to hear a scream of agony; but all was silence; only those in the arena saw the grey shade of anguish that passed over the face of the queen. For a few moments Heraclius continued in prayer; then noticing the motion of her lips as she prayed, he rose, advanced a little nearer to her, and repeated in their native Georgian, which the bystanders could not understand,

"AND HE WAS WITHDRAWN FROM THEM

ABOUT A STONE'S CAST, AND KNEELED DOWN AND PRAYED, SAYING, FATHER, IF THOU BE WILLING, LET THIS CUP PASS FROM ME; NEVERTHELESS NOT MY WILL, BUT THINE BE DONE. AND THERE APPEARED AN ANGEL UNTO HIM, STRENGTHENING HIM. AND BEING IN AN AGONY, HE PRAYED MORE EARNESTLY: AND HIS SWEAT WAS AS IT WERE GREAT DROPS OF BLOOD FALLING DOWN TO THE GROUND."

Ketevan turned her head, and gave the Priest one look, and that look to the end of his life came back upon him again and again; and made him, as he constantly affirmed, more realize what manner of visage is that of the Blessed Ones, than ever before he had been able for one moment to conceive.

"An it please your Highness," said one of the executioners, "the iron is cooling."

"Let me see your art succeed better, this time," replied the governor.

The executioners left the queen and returned to the fire. Father Heraclius bending over her, said, "Cheer up! my daughter! The battle is half over! It is not His wont to fail

His own in the middle of the strife. Courage but a few moments more, and you shall be with Him."

"I shall," said Queen Ketevan, faintly; but her voice was faint from bodily weakness, not from fear.

I do not mean to pain you by telling all that followed. I do not generally love to dwell so minutely on a Martyrdom as I have now done. "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet: for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." But if I had not related to you in part the faith of S. Ketevan, you could have learnt it from no other source.

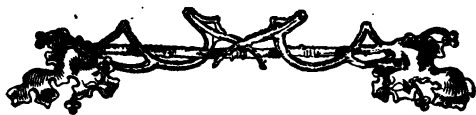
They brought heated bars of iron, and laid them across her body, and still her lips moved in prayer; and the Priest, ever and anon, ceasing from his own supplications, spoke to the dying queen of the LORD's decease which He accomplished in Jerusalem. And almost as her soul was in departing, they set a red hot crown of iron in her forehead. And so they killed the body, and after that had no more that they could do. For long before the iron diadem had cooled on her brow, her LORD

prevented her with the blessings of goodness, and set a crown of pure gold on her head. And, as the Christians gazed on the pale quiet face, and thought of the new song in which the Martyr was even then joining, as they looked round on the scowling countenances, or listened to the rude jests or blasphemies of the mob, and knew that Ketevan was with the Angels, and, as the Church has always taught of Martyrs, enjoying the Beatific Vision, how did their hearts burn within them to be with her again !

One month later, the city of Alaverde in Georgia was full of joy and exultation. The streets were strewn with flowers, the doors wreathed with garlands, the bells pealed musically, trumpets brayed, and flutes breathed softly : the Georgian lifeguards lined the way from the suburb to the Cathedral, and maidens and matrons were in their richest attire. The king and queen were on foot at the gate of the city, while the archbishop and his clergy moved forward in procession, chanting the 118th Psalm. And as they thundered out, "*Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord,*" the

open hearse drew nigh that bore, ransomed by the Latin Friars, the precious remains of the Martyr Queen. And so, with song and jubilee, they ascended to the Metropolitan Church. *"Thou hast thrust sore at me,"* they chanted, *"that I might fall, but the Lord was my help."* *"The Lord,"* replied they, *"is my strength and my song, and is become my salvation."* *"The right hand of the Lord,"* thundered the Priests, *"hath the pre-eminence :"* *"the right hand of the Lord,"* replied the Deacons, *"bringeth mighty things to pass."* *"This,"* they chanted at the great western door, *"is the gate of the Lord : the righteous shall enter into it."*

And so now the body of S. Ketevan, Queen and Martyr, awaits the LORD'S Second Coming in the Church of the Holy Cross at Alaverde.



Monday in Holy Week.

THE PRIEST AT THE OUTPOST.

A.D. 1524.

AND so the one great feast of Lent is over, and we have entered on those sad days, which will grow more and more gloomy, till they bring us down into the very valley of the shadow of death. We have been with our dear LORD this morning; we have been keeping our eyes on Him as He was when the days of His mortal life were drawing to an end. And now we shall hardly be taking them off Him if we turn to see how one of His servants trod in His footsteps. I will tell you then another of the valiant deeds which they who were His soldiers here, and are now His guests, wrought in His strength, and for His Name's sake.

There are few times in the history of the Church of which it is so sad to read or to speak, as the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth century in Germany. Bishoprics and Abbeys were given away according to the will of princes; children were often presented to them. The wealth of the Church caused men to enter into Orders who, if they did not deny God with their mouth, at least did so in their heart. Many Priests led lives of open wickedness; and the people gradually learnt to despise those who were over them in the LORD, and should have admonished them. By the wars from which Europe was then suffering, God was calling to the Church to remember from whence she had fallen, and repent; and well had it been if she had listened to His call in time.

Yet it is of that age that I am now going to tell you a story; the first which it has given me, and I dare say it will be the last.

The little town of Heinsberg, in the Netherlands, which was held by the French, was closely besieged by an army of the Emperor Charles V.; none went out, and none came in.

The troops whom the General, Marshal Von Sickingen, had gathered together for this service, were the worst of the half robbers, half soldiers who had long been the curse of Europe. They had no country; they had no home; they fought for the king that would pay them best; their own lusts were their god; and their hearts were as hard as the nether mill-stone.

You must remember what the character of these men really was; else my story, true though it be, will seem strange to you. But the fact is that the generals scarcely dared to check these freebooters. A harsh word, and much more any punishment, would send them over to the enemy. Their discipline in battle was excellent; at other times they did as they would, and none dared to say them nay.

The siege had lasted much longer than was expected, and the soldiers began to murmur at the heat of the weather, (for it was now July,) the unhealthiness of the country, and the want of provisions. It was in vain that good Father Gaspar, the army chaplain, did what he could in his office; he was plentifully mocked, bitterly reviled; and still, like his

Blessed Master, he went on in his labours, remembering that it is written, "Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days."

He set out, then, on a summer evening, from his poor tent, to see a party of soldiers, encamped at an outpost on a rising ground, (or, in that flat country, you might call it a hill,) about three miles from Heinsberg. The reason why they were placed there was to give notice if any French troops should advance; for there was some talk of assistance to the garrison from Maestricht, or Aix-la-Chapelle.

His path led him across the marshes, just as the sun was setting in glory over the vast plain of the Maas. He could catch the sluggish river winding for many a mile before him, sometimes shining like a silver serpent, sometimes only to be tracked by the reeds and rushes which grew upon its banks. But as he descended the slope, there was nothing to be seen but the swampy moor, and here and there the remains of what had been a barley or wheat field, destroyed in that summer's war.

Perhaps it was a sight like this; perhaps it

was the thought of the little fruit he reaped from his labours, that made the good Priest's heart very sad. The lark sprang up, and sang her vespers far above his head; the bittern boomed from the sedgy pool; a flight of rooks winged their way homewards; but, if he saw these things, he did not notice them. His whole soul was filled with the thoughts of those among whom he had to labour; the misery of their life, their wickedness in words and deeds, and the terrible account they would render at their death.

We will step on before him, and see what the party to whom he is going are about. Their post was under cover of a little wood, that stood a bow's shot from the road side. Some of the trees they had cut down for firing and for huts; and the elm and the plane that had arrayed themselves in all their green beauty, and had seen so many cowslips clustering round their roots, when May came in, now lay in logs, or chips, or charred fragments in the midst of their forest companions. Two rude huts had been built for the party; it consisted of ten men, and was under the

command of Lanzprisade Herck. And there, on the soft smooth turf, they lay; tall, ruffianly-looking men, with matted hair and beard; half armed; and showing, in the midst of their filth and wretchedness, many an ornament or piece of apparel clearly obtained in the sack of some town. In one or two cases, this finery was marked with a dark red stain, which told what had become of its former owner. There they lay, drinking, playing at dice, or quarrelling; and polluting the calm evening with words and subjects, of which, as S. Paul says, it is a shame for Christians even to speak.

They were good soldiers, however; and they were well armed. For each, beside sword and dagger, wore at his belt a *wheel-lock* pistol, then a very rare invention; and, in addition to this, lying beside them, or leaning against the hut, each man had his wheel-lock carbine, carrying two charges, after the fashion of the time, in the same barrel. And furthermore, posted in front of the wood, so as to command the road from the west, were two cannon, and strange things they were: made

of rings of iron, closely welded together, and fixed in a bed of elmwood.

The conversation of these men, if I leave out their oaths and blasphemies, proceeded somehow thus :

“It’s true, Hans,” cried one of the fiercest of the party, “and I should like to see the man that will deny it: do that, and a cannon ball will never miss.”

“Do what?” cried another, looking up from his game of dice.

“Why, christen the ball,” answered the first speaker, whose name was Martin Gheel; “I remember, when I was serving at Huy, we got a friar to christen several for us; and it was well seen that they never missed. One of those balls took off the top of S. Thomas’s spire, as clean as I might cut off a poppy-head.”

“Ay?” asked Hans. “Well, that’s a secret worth knowing. Let us have some christened here; for if the French are so nigh as they say, by S. Sebaldus, we shall need them!”

“So say I,” cried Ryke Vorsel; “where-

fore, whoever goes next to camp, bid the Priest come and do it."

"No need to send," said Hans, "for here 'a comes."

And he looked over the marsh towards Heinsberg.

"That he!" cried Martin; "no more he than you."

"You lie!" retorted Hans; "I can see him plain."

Martin caught up his gun, and rushing towards the other had raised the butt end to knock him down; while Hans' dagger flew in a moment out of its sheath. The Lanzprisade hurried between them. "Peace, fools!" quoth he: "there shall be no brawling here, or my name's not Melchior Herck. It's the Priest, sure enough."

Five minutes more brought Father Gaspar up to the outpost."

"*Benedicite*, my sons," said he. "Methought I heard a brawl here; I am glad it is not so."

"You come in happy time, Sir Priest," said the Lanzprisade. "We want a christening done."

"A christening, my son! I understand you not."

"We want you to christen some of yonder balls, father," said Martin Gheel. "They never miss their mark then."

"I trust you do but jest," replied the Priest; "and yet it is an ill matter for a jest."

"Faith, not we, father," cried the Lanzprisade; "wherefore do it at once."

"What! profane a sacrament by turning it into a charm! You call yourselves Christian men, and ask it!"

"Ay, and mean to have it, too," said Hans; "so be quick."

"My sons," said the Priest, "I shall do no such thing. How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against the LORD? And how can you be so fond as to believe that, even if I were guilty of such extremity of sacrilege, it would advantage you?"

"Don't preach here, Sir Priest," cried Martin Gheel. "I know a friar baptized some balls for us at Huy, and one of them knocked down a church spire; I saw it with my own eyes."

"If you found any man miserable enough to do so profanely, God have mercy on him!" replied Father Gaspar. "Truly a worthy deed of such a ball! The devil put the wickedness into your hearts, and he speeded the shot also, it seems."

"Now, father," said Ryke Vorsel, coming close up to him, and speaking in a voice that trembled with passion; "will you do as we would have you, or will you not?"

"I have said, my son," answered the Priest.

"Then, comrades," continued Ryke, "let us try one of these same balls on the Priest's body. Said I well?"

"We will, we will!" shouted several voices; and more than one hand was laid on Father Gaspar.

"Tie him at the mouth of the cannon," suggested Hans, "and put a match to the touch-hole."

"My sons," said the Priest, as gently as if he had been treating of a matter in which he was not himself concerned, "I pray you, for God's sake, to beware what you do. Murder in itself is a sin most damnable; how much

more when he that is murdered is one of God's Priests ! and how much, most of all, when he is murdered for doing his duty !”

“ You murder yourself,” cried Martin Gheel. “ Come, come ; do as we wish, and no one shall touch a hair of your head.”

“ Never !” replied Father Gaspar ; “ and you, Lanzprisade, remember that I shall be missed and inquired for. See how you will answer that.”

“ Never you concern yourself about that,” said Melchoir Herck. “ I will answer for it, and for a good deal more.”

“ I fear it is too true,” said the Priest. “ Poor miserable men,” he continued, as they forced him to the mouth of the cannon, “ you think to hurt me, and you will but hurt yourselves. Is it any loss, think you, to me to go home to Him Whom I have always loved ?”

A shout of derision was the only answer ; and Father Gaspar contented himself with praying in secret that God would accept this sacrifice of himself, and would forgive his murderers. They made him in the meantime, sit down before the cannon, leaning his chest

against its mouth, and then bound his arms around it.

"Now for a light, Hans," said Martin Gheel. Flint, and steel, and tinder were produced; a light was struck, and Ryke Vorsel lit the match.

"God forgive you!" said Father Gaspar, looking steadily at him.

"Now, then, once more," cried Ryke, holding the match in his hand. "Will you christen the ball?"

"No," replied the Priest.

"Ask him, Lanzprisade," said Ryke, "with once, twice, and thrice; let us do the thing fairly."

"Once, Sir Priest," asked Melchior Herck; "will you do it?"

"LORD, lay not this sin to their charge!" prayed Father Gaspar.

"Twice,—will you do it?"

"LORD JESUS, receive my spirit!" said the Priest.

"Thrice!" And, as he spoke, the match touched the powder. The priming flashed, but no report followed; and Father Gaspar, who had closed his eyes, opened them, not, as he had

trusted, on the light that the blessed ones see, but on the twilight of this world.

"Flashed," cried the Lanzprisade, with a blasphemous oath; "try again, Ryke."

"Hold hard! Hold hard!" roared one of the others; "here's some one from camp."

The party turned their eyes; and, at about two hundred yards distance, four horsemen and a led horse were hurrying on in a full gallop.

"Unbind him! unbind him!" cried Melchior Herck.

It was done in a moment. The soldiers stood around, looking this way and that way, too proud to ask the Priest's forgiveness, and yet dreading his complaint. Father Gaspar saw that they would not, even in their danger, humble themselves before him; and so, desiring by any means to win them to CHRIST, he gave them the promise which they would not supplicate.

"Now, my sons," said he, "are your lives in my power, as mine but of late was in yours. If I were to inform against you, you know best what would be the consequences. But mark me well; I shall say no word of what you

threatened, and what, but for God's grace, you would have performed. All the reward that I ask is this ; that, for the love of God, you will hear me patiently when I next come to you."

Even the hearts of those hardened men were touched.

"God forgive us, good father," cried Martin Gheel, "and do you forgive us too !" And lips that had for many a year ceased to ask for mercy and pardon, asked it then for the first time.

"Father," cried a cornet, galloping up, "the marshal prays you to ride back to camp as speedily as may be. They have sent a flag of truce from the town. The governor is wounded, and requires ghostly consolation ; and there is no holy man in the place."

"I will come at once," said Father Gaspar. "And you, my sons, farewell for the present : I pray God this day's lesson may not be lost upon you !"



Tuesday in Holy Week.

THE PRÆFECT'S VISION.

JUNE 26, A.D. 363.

“**B**EHOLD, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of Mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.” Thus it is that God speaks in the epistle for to-day; and I am going to tell you of one in whom the prophecy was fulfilled;—of one who, when the Sun of Righteousness had risen upon him, loved the darkness rather than the light, because his deeds were evil; and after compassing himself about with the miserable sparks of worldly luxury and Pagan philosophy, did indeed lie down in sorrow.

Julian the Apostate is one of those of whom, like Balaam and Judas, it is hardly possible to speak without awe. If any man ever did so, he certainly crucified to himself the SON of GOD afresh, and put Him to an open shame : if for any man, surely for him it would seem that there remained no place for repentance ; but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation. I had rather tell you of some mighty deed which GOD has done for His saints, or by them, than of such a man ; but yet I will not pass by one of the many stories which have to do with his end. The Church could not but rejoice with trembling when the tempter and persecutor of her children was destroyed, and could not but see her LORD's hand as the means of his destruction, and in the signs that went before it.

Julian was now on his march against the Persians. In spite of warnings, and dreams, and auguries, he would proceed. His heart was hardened, and every step was bringing him nearer to his bloody end, and to his fearful sentence.

It was on the evening of the 26th of June, three hundred and sixty-three years after our

LORD's birth, that an officer of high rank in the Roman army, Cneius Piso by name, was riding through the wild deserts of Mesopotamia, on his road to Nisibis. He wished, if possible, to come up with Julian before the decisive battle with the Persians should be fought; and having had some military business at Antioch which had delayed him beyond his expectations, he was now endeavouring to make up for lost time. The horses of the two soldiers who were his attendants, and his own, gave plain proofs that their strength and speed had not been spared; and now, as the sun was slowly sinking behind the hills of Chalybonitis, the Præfect of the Wing saw that his day's journey must conclude.

"Cheer up, brave Æthon;" he said to his horse; "you have made a good day's work of it, and shall rest well. Orisbanes, good fellow,—you know the country: where can we put up for the night?"

"There is no town nearer than Daras, my Lord," said the Syrian, riding up a little closer to his officer; "and that we shall hardly reach, for it must be five leagues off yet."

"But is there no place of any kind where we might escape the dew? Provisions we have,—and shelter and water is all that we need."

"If I am not mistaken, my Lord," replied Orisbanes, "about a quarter of a league further on there is a Church, hard by the way-side. There, doubtless, we might sleep, and our horses will find plenty of grass at hand; for, as I remember me, there is a spring in that place."

"Excellently well thought of, good Orisbanes. I know not why, I feel somewhat heavy this evening,—the heat of the day, I suppose. But we must look for hotter work yet."

"The army must have suffered greatly," said Damasus, the other soldier, "judging by the number of sick men left at every village on the road."

"I fear we must expect nothing else," said Piso. "The Cross that led Constantine, of blessed memory, to victory, leads us no longer. All these stories we hear of the Cæsar's determination to advance at all risks, make me call

to mind Ahab and Ramoth-Gilead. But that changes not our duty a whit. It is our place to show that the Christians, whom he thinks to be the great enemies of the empire, shall be as far in the ranks of the Persians, as the boldest Pagan of them all."

"So said the Bishop of Antioch, my Lord," remarked Orisbanes. "I laid it to my heart; for, truth to say, before that, I had some doubts whether I should not rather suffer the worst, than follow an Apostate to battle."

"So would you have erred grievously, in my judgment," replied the Præfect; "and not in mine alone. As I remember, it was blessed Paul who wrote, 'Wherefore ye must needs be subject not only for wrath, but even for conscience' sake.' But, as I think, there is the Church."

A few minutes more, and the weary horses were enjoying themselves in the green meadow that surrounded the fountain whereof Orisbanes had spoken. The Church itself, a low, dark, cross-shaped building, with a dome in the centre, had lately, it appeared, been broken open. Piso entered at the western door.

Fragments of barley-bread, and the embers of a fire, were in the narthex,—that is, the western porch, where the Catechumens used to pray. But the doors leading from that into the nave were locked, and it seemed had stood out against some hasty efforts to beat them down.

“Stragglers from the army,” observed Piso. “But it is a lonely place for a Church.”

“I have heard, my Lord,” answered Orisbanes, “that blessed Thomas tarried here a night when on his way to India.”

“We are the more happy,” said the Præfect. “But now, I pray you, see what provisions we have, and fill my helmet with water from the spring. It darkens apace.”

Orisbanes opened a kind of wallet which he carried at his saddle, and produced some barley cakes and roasted fowls, which had been bought during their last halt at Maride. Damasus went down to the spring, that bubbled up at the side of a puny hill; and was belted in with rushes, Tauric hyacinths, and the Forget-me-not. The supper was soon spread in front of the Church; the horses were tethered

nigh at hand. Piso bade his comrades to sit down with him ; and, making the sign of the cross over their food, officer and soldiers did equal justice to their fare.

"If we could do as we have done to-day," said Piso, at the conclusion of the meal, "fourteen days would bring us up with the Emperor. I would be content, however, with eighteen."

"And that will be no bad speed, my Lord," said Damasus.

"Surely not," replied the Præfect. "Well to you both !" And, putting a small flask of wine to his mouth, he passed it on to his followers.

Their arrangements for the night were soon made. A deerskin and two sheepskins, the first belonging to Piso, the other to the soldiers, were spread on the floor of the narthex. Orisbanes took the first watch, Damasus the second, and the Præfect, like a true Roman soldier, insisted on having the third. They made the sign of the cross, knelt, said the LORD'S Prayer and the Creed of Nicæa ; and then Damasus and Piso stretched themselves on their hard couches ; and Orisbanes, having

loosened his belt, and brought the sword round so as to be within his grasp, walked up and down in front of the western door, while the thousand stars of the bright Syrian sky were looking down peacefully upon him.

Piso slept. He thought that he was suddenly carried to some blessed place, where at first every other sense and feeling were swallowed up in the one idea of glory. There was a light—but not as that of the sun;—there was harmony—but not as that of earth: ear had not heard, nor eye seen, neither had it entered into the heart of man to conceive what he then beheld, but what he could never describe. By degrees he saw lovely forms, and faces radiant with glory, and heads crowned with light;—and he perceived that he had been translated to the Heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of Saints, to the general assembly and Church of the First-born, which is written in heaven, and to the spirits of just men made perfect. By degrees, as he became accustomed to the brilliance of the place, he gazed on and he knew the forms that passed him. There was Ignatius, as when he played

the man in the amphitheatre ; but the wounds of the lion's teeth now flashed forth such brightness of glory, that Piso dared not look ; there was Polycarp, as when he ascended in the fire to blessedness ; there was Agnes, with the snow-white lamb by her side ; there was Lawrence, that was roasted alive for his care of the poor ; there was Cyprian, that went home by the sword ; there was Pherbutha, that was cut to pieces for her love to the heavenly Bridegroom : and the innumerable martyrs of Saragossa, that were burnt to lime : and the forty soldiers of Sebaste, frozen in the midnight pool : and Sebastian, that was shot to death with arrows : and Hippolytus, that was torn to pieces with wild horses. There, too, were the Virgins that follow the LAMB whithersoever He goeth : there, too, the Doctors, and Confessors, and Wonderworkers of the Church militant. And what shall I more say ? for the time would fail me to tell of Babylas, and Fabian, and Vincent, and Margaret, and Agatha, and Cyrilla, of bishops, and priests, and martyrs, who by faith gave up their bodies to the wild beasts,

were scourged, were hung on pillars, were racked, were strangled, were tortured with red-hot pincers, with boiling oil, with molten lead, were maimed, were blinded, were torn in pieces. All these were before him—all, from the Apostles to the last martyrs under Julian, Eugenius, and Macarius; all arrayed in such glory, all filled with such blessedness, as might befit the “valiant men that had been in scarlet,” the saints whom the King of kings delighteth to honour.

Piso listened. “How long, Holy and Just, how long?”—they said. “Julian hath blasphemed Thy Holy Name, hath done sacrifice to devils, hath thrown down Thine altars, hath done despite to the SPIRIT of Grace. How long, Merciful and True, how long?—Julian hath turned many aside unto Satan,—he hath profaned Thy holiness,—he hath scoffed at Thy word,—he hath counted the Blood of the Covenant an unclean thing. How long, Avenger of Thy Saints, how long? He hath slain Thy martyrs; he hath banished Thy confessors; he hath done despite to Thy virgins; he hath cast Thy bishops into prison;

he hath tormented them that were valiant for the truth upon the earth. How long, LORD GOD of Hosts, how long ?”

Then there was silence in Heaven for a brief space. Forthwith two spirits, terrible in their glory, stood before the rest. “We go,” they said, “to destroy him.” And they seemed to pass out from the Presence of Light.

“Orisbanes !” cried Piso. “Damasus ! Orisbanes !”

“My Lord——”

“God preserve you, my Lord ;—what ails you ?”

“Water, Orisbanes !”

“The sweat is pouring off his face. What is it, for God’s sake, my Lord ?”

“Drink, my Lord—I pray you what is it ?”

Slowly and by degrees, Piso told his tale. “It is surely strange,” cried Orisbanes. “What deem you of it, Lord Præfect ?”

“As of a warning from God,” replied his officer ; “I am minded to wait here for further tidings.” And indeed it soon became plain that Piso had suffered so much from the

terror of the vision, that it would scarcely be possible for him to continue his journey on the following day. It was resolved, then, that Damasus should procure some provisions from the nearest village; and that on the morrow the little party should advance to Nisibis, where Piso proposed to take counsel with the Bishop.

Evening came once again on the desert. Again the hills of Chalybonitis grew crimson, purple, grey, dark in the twilight. Piso, wearied with the excitement of the evening before, lay in the narthex; and his two attendants resolved to watch him for a while.

For an hour or so he lay quietly,—then his dreams became troubled,—his hands were clenched,—the cold sweat stood on his brow, and with a start he woke.

“I have seen the vision again,” he gasped out: “again, but yet different. Those two that went to execute vengeance on Julian have returned; and they say that it is done.”

And six hundred miles away, even as he was speaking, the philosopher Priscus had closed the eyes of the Apostate.

One more story, and I have done.

The next morning, a Christian grammarian at Antioch had just broken up school. The boys poured down street and alley, right glad of their liberty. John—for that was his name—was locking up the desk at which he had been seated, when the door opened, and Libanius, a heathen philosopher, entered.

"Aha, John," cried he. "School over? I pity you from my heart, man, teaching without having anything to teach."

"Why, it is true," replied John, "that the Emperor has deprived us of the power of teaching from the poets and philosophers of former times. So much the more are we like those blessed Apostles, who knew that the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God."

"Ay," answered Libanius; "and so much the more like their Master. Pray, what may the Carpenter's Son be doing now?"

"The Carpenter's Son," replied John, "is now making a coffin for the emperor."

And at that very hour the preparations for Julian's funeral were going on in the far distant camp by the side of the Tigris.



Wednesday in Holy Week.

THE TUNNY FISHERS.

“YOU will promise, then, to take care of little Pietro, if I let him go with you? You will promise it, Rocco?”

“I will, indeed, mother. There is no danger in the world.”

“Remember that your father cannot attend to him as a common sailor might do; you must be father and brother to him at once.”

“Well, I will try, mother,” replied Rocco. “But the boats will not start for this half hour.”

So it was that Agata Gazani was talking to her eldest son, a tall, good-humoured lad, some fifteen or sixteen years old, with a bright blue eye, dark hair that curled all over his

forehead, and a complexion as brown as a berry, from the Sardinian sun, and the breezes of the Mediterranean. Their cottage stood just on the outskirts of Le Saline, one of the few places in Sardinia where the tunny fishery is still kept up. The father of Rocco was Rais, or commander of the boats; an office requiring, as you will see, great skill, and courage, and presence of mind, and experience. Rocco was being brought up to the same profession; and little Pietro was eager to go with him, for it was the first *mattanza*—that is, slaughter of the tunnies—which he had ever seen.

I must tell you that the same God, Who teaches the swallow and the nightingale to know their appointed time for coming into our own pleasant land, causes those great fish, the tunnies, to leave the Atlantic about the middle of April, and then, passing up the Mediterranean, to enter the Black Sea, and return about August. No man knows the reason of this visit, though thus it has always been since the times of the ancient Greeks; and hundreds of poor fishermen are made rich every year by

the taking of the tunnies. But there is some danger in the fishery, as you will presently hear; and therefore it was that Agata so carefully commended her little Pietro in charge to his brother. For Rocco promised to be one of the best hands in Sardinia; and very proud was he that he was so trusted.

"Well, Agata, it is time for us to be off!" cried Angelo Gazani, opening the little wicket of his cottage garden. "God bless you! God bless you! and never doubt to see us home to-night with as good a catch as was ever brought into Le Saline."

"God guard you!" said his wife, as she threw herself into his arms; "and have an eye, as much as you can, to little Pietro."

"Ay, ay; that won't be much, though, I warrant you, if we have good luck. Rocco will be worth two of me. Well, good-bye!" And in a few minutes the little boat was on her way to the great net.

It might be about ten o'clock on a May morning, and the fair hills of Sardinia glided swiftly and gently into the sweet, soft haze. Very soon the little fleet of boats came into

sight; first like an indistinct black mass floating on the deep,—then separating out from each other,—then clearly each distinguishable. And as Angelo's boat flew forward, there was a general shout from the fourteen barges which waited his coming.

Now I must describe to you the *madraga*, or net, where the capture of the tunnies takes place. As it floats beneath the waves, it is divided into seven chambers, each separated the one from the other, and growing narrower and narrower to the west. The fish enter at the easternmost of these, and gradually find their way in, escape becoming more and more impossible, till they reach the last chamber but one. This is called the *Camera dell' Oro*, the *chamber of gold*, because once there, the fish are considered as so much gold in the pocket. Hence there is a narrow passage into the last division, the *Camera della Morte*, the *chamber of death*, because there the slaughter takes place.

"Ay, ay, lads, here I am!" cried Angelo Gazani, in his clear, good-humoured voice. "A little leave-taking, you know. Ah! you

youngsters; you will come to it yourselves some of these days." And so saying, he pulled his little skiff to the side of the *Camera dell' Oro*. Then a change seemed to come over him at once. He was no longer the gay, light-hearted Sardinian fisherman; he was the leader in a strife on which the year's support, not only of his family, but of his whole village, greatly depended. Leaning over the side of his boat, he watched the vast shoal of tunnies deep down in the still, purple water. There they slowly moved to and fro; and the sun's rays, piercing the calm sea, made them seem a flock of golden sheep,—gold, flashing, however sometimes into a glorious purple, sometimes chequered with a silver shade. Not a word was spoken; not a fisherman moved. The barges lay listlessly on the ebbing tide; even little Pietro knew that he must not say a word, and looked at his father, half in eager expectation of what was going to happen, half in fear at seeing so different an expression in his face from aught that he had ever before beheld. There might have been a pause of ten minutes, and during that time Angelo moved not. But

when he rose he not only knew the number of the fish in a shoal of five hundred, but was acquainted with each individual tunny, so that he could have told it again. Such wonderful powers of memory has a Rais !

The fish were still in the *Camera dell' Oro*. They could not get back, for the eastern entrance was closed ; but they would not go on.

“Shake a sail at the eastern end !” cried Angelo.

Two barges were at once steered thither, and the crews joined their strength in flapping a sail with the loudest sound they could produce. The Rais was again leaning over his boat's side, and intently watching the shoal. Presently one or two of the largest fishes approached the fatal western entrance, examined it, seemed to suspect danger ; examined it again ; and all the while the shoal was pressing in that direction, to avoid the shadow and sound of the flapping sail.

For the third time the leaders approached the entrance, and, after one moment's delay, swam in.

“God be praised !” said Angelo, in a low

voice ; and little Pietro, scarcely knowing why, copied his father, and said, " God be praised ! " Two minutes more, and the whole shoal had entered the chamber of death.

Angelo sprang up. "*Ammorsella !*" he cried, "*ammorsella !* Let down the portcullis !"

It was done : and the fishes being thus secured, though knowing nothing of their danger, the boats drew in a closer circle round the chamber of death. The crews stripped themselves of cloaks, handkerchiefs, and waist-coats ; and put on tightly-fitting leathern jerkins,—stained from neck to waist by many a token of past war with the tunnies.

" Now then ! " cried the Rais. In an instant every cap was off, every knee was bent : and following him they chanted, to a quiet monotonous melody, that seemed to be just in accordance with the dreamy rise and fall of the waves, and the play of the sunbeams on the waters,—the Litany of the Fishermen. They called on Him Who was pleased to choose the greater part of His Disciples from among the fishers, Who had bade S. Peter to take the fish in whose mouth was the piece of money,

Who had commanded the Apostles to let down the net on the right side of the ship, and Who had Himself vouchsafed to eat of that which they had taken ; they called on Him Who had said, *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you*, so to assist them then that they might return to their homes in peace and with plenty.

Their prayers finished, word was given to haul in the net. And now as the fish, that were quietly reposing in its deep bosom, far, far below the surface of the sea, began to feel their prison narrowing and straitening, they darted this way and that, they wheeled round and round, sometimes they would leap right out of the waves,—till gradually the surface of the sea boiled in white froth. And now the topmost of the herd were above water ; their scales flashing and burning amidst the foam : and still the tumult and agitation increased ; and still the men bent more merrily to their task.

“Ready, lads ?” asked the Rais.

“Ay, ay,” was answered cheerily from all sides.

"If we have a good haul, the best of the fish—I know him—I call him *pavone*, (peacock)—shall be for the Priest of S. Peter's at Le Saline. Now then, are the nets hauled tight?"

"Ay, ay, Rais!"

"All together, then!" shouted the Captain: and the slaughter began. Clubs, pikes, reaping-hooks, oars, harpoons,—all were darted at the tunny shoal: the huge fishes rolled over and over, dashed this way and that, floundered, lashed the sea with their fins and tails in their agony, as before in their fright; the white foam was dyed in a deadly crimson. And still the shouts of the boatmen grew louder, and the struggles of the dying fish fiercer: a wild war it was, waged on that calm and beautiful day, and off that quiet shore.

Pietro shrank back into the stern of the boat, for the shouts, and the plunging of the fish, and the sight of the blood terrified him, as well it might. On a sudden, a huge tunny dashed against the boat. Pietro lost his balance, fell backward, disappeared for a moment, rose again, and was swept off by the current: for

though he could swim, he had not strength to contend against it.

"Rocco! Father! Rocco!" he shouted.

Rocco was about to plunge in, and five or six of the younger fishermen were eager each to leap first, when suddenly there was a sharp shrill scream along the whole line of boats.

"A shark! a shark!" was the cry.

A long dark line, just above water, was moving rapidly towards Pietro.

"Hold him fast! don't let him go!" shouted several of the fishermen, as Rocco was about to plunge in.

"I *will* go!" cried Rocco. "Hands off! I *will* go! He was given to my care!" And he dashed into the water.

All eyes were on him—every one crowded to the stern of their boats. "Shout out! scream! splash the water!" they cried. And Rocco had presence of mind to do so, for he knew how cowardly sharks are.

"Help me, for God's sake!" cried the Rais, as he tried to raise one of the tunnies. Five or six brawny arms assisted him in heaving it

towards the shark, in the hope that it might divert him from his prey.

But steadily, steadily, he glides on after it. Rocco has thrown his left arm round Pietro, and is swimming well and strongly with his right. The shark gains on them every moment. The sailors shout, halloo, scream, fling everything that comes to hand at the monster.

And now Rocco has but three or four strokes more, and the shark is yet five yards off. Now his right hand is on the gunwale of the boat: Pietro is dragged in; three or four of the sailors clutch Rocco; they are lifting him: the Rais exclaims, "Thank God!" when the shark turns on his side, shows his white belly above the water; and even as Rocco is in the very arms of his friends, the monster's teeth meet through his body. One shriek, one convulsion, and Pietro was saved at the cost of his brother's life.

S. Paul tells us, that "scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die." This story is an example of what he teaches;

and, at this holy time, it should lead our thoughts on, as the Apostle also leads them—
“But God commendeth His love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, CHRIST died for us.”





Maundy Thursday.

THE THEBAN LEGION.

A.D. 285.



UTUMN had come down on the Alps. The wind swept more roughly over the blue face of Lake Lemán; the howl of the wolf was heard nightly through the forests of the Rhone; the mountains clothed themselves in whiter snow, and the woods put on those glorious tints which make the decline of the year so lovely. The peasants went more rarely from village to village; the gates of towns were shut up earlier, and opened later; the fresh cask of wine was broached for the winter, and the wood-sellers went their last rounds with their creaking waggons.

The Emperor Maximian was at Octodurus,

—the place is now called Martigny; it lies where the river Drance falls into the Rhone, and so about half way between the lake of Geneva and the great S. Bernard. At Agaunum, near the foot of this mountain, the legion surnamed *the Theban*, lately arrived from the East, was in winter quarters; and it is to those quarters that I must now take you. True, in the olden times a stationary camp was a very sink of wickedness; and for a child or a woman to have ventured near it would have been a work of no small risk. But the Theban legion, to a man, were Christians; and you might have walked from one end to the other of their city-camp without fearing the least injury,—yes, and without hearing a word which you need have shrunk from understanding.

Up and down the *Via Quintana* of this camp, (it was the main road leading from east to west,) two officers were walking, and engaged in earnest conversation. They were both in the very vigour of manhood; both wore the scarlet *paludamentum*, bordered with purple; and on whatever subject they were talking, it certainly was not of a cheerful kind. It was

about the twelfth hour; the sun had just set behind Mount Voirons, but the southern Alps had put on that unearthly tint of rose, which makes the traveller that gazes on them afar off think them to be nothing less than an evening vision of Paradise. A hundred fires were sending up their blue smoke through the camp, for it was nearly supper-time. Here and there you might see a group of soldiers cooking some savoury mess; here and there a knot of busy talkers; and at the *porta principalis dextra* a large body of foragers were bringing in hay and wood. But still, as those two officers paced unweariedly backwards and forwards, many a glance was sent after them, and many a thought taken up by their movements.

“I wonder,” said Valens, the centurion of the second century of the third maniple of the *hastati*, to Magnus, one of his soldiers, “what that despatch was about from the emperor?”

“Are you sure it was a despatch?” inquired the soldier.

“Certain,” replied the other. “I knew the bearer of it myself when we served in Greece, and he told me that Maximian had given it

into his own hands, and bade him lose no time in doing his errand; also he said that the Augustus was full of displeasure at somewhat that had crossed him."

"Well, then," said Magnus, "it is of that, be sure, the tribunes are now speaking."

Magnus was right; it was of the emperor's despatch that the two officers, Maurice and Exuperius, were now holding council. And as heretofore I have taken you into the prison, the amphitheatre, the sick room, the market, the palace, that we might see how, in each and all, those early Christians played the man for CHRIST; so now we will walk up and down the *Via Quintana* with those two tribunes, and listen to what they are saying.

"It is even so, worthy Exuperius," said Maurice. "The Augustus has heard, and most truly, that there are thousands of Christians in Gallia Cisalpina, and among the Allobroges,"—that is, in Savoy and Dauphiné,— "and he intends us to weed them out while the legion is in winter quarters."

"There is not a man in the legion," cried Exuperius, "that would thus serve the devil.

Against his own enemy, the usurper Amandus, none, he knows it well, will venture further. But what are we to do?"

"I have sent in all directions for Candidus; we can hardly decide without him. When he comes, we will take counsel at my tent; and to-morrow we will convoke the centurions, read them the mandate, and have an answer framed to which they may give their assent."

"So be it," replied Exuperius. "Let the time be the second hour to-morrow. And it were well to give the troops notice to-night that none of the centurions may be absent."

"We will do it," said Maurice. "How now, good Julius?"

"If it please you," replied the *tesserarius*, or watchword-man, advancing with a military reverence, "the sun hath been set this half hour." And he offered a square piece of wood, covered with a thin coating of wax.

"The word for to-night," said Maurice, the tribune in command, as he marked it with his sharp *style* on the wax, "shall be *Vicit fides*," (the faith hath conquered.) "And hark ye, good fellow; send me one of the trumpeters here."

A soldier, bearing a crooked *buccina* of brass, presently made his appearance.

“Go round the camp, Fortunatus,” said Maurice, “and proclaim, by sound of trumpet, that all the centurions are to meet me at the *principia* (the head quarters) at the second hour to-morrow. And stay—I think we should have as large an attendance as possible ;—summon the *optiones* (lieutenants) of the *triarii* (the veterans) also: the business, to hear a mandate from the Augustus.—And now, Exuperius, let us to my tent.”

The brave soldiers of the Theban Legion had learnt in its full sense the meaning of that saying of S. Paul’s, “Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit.” Nowhere in the Roman army was there better discipline. Indeed the strictness of that legion, at a time when discipline was very much decayed, quite recalled the old days of Fabius and Scipio. I might describe to you how, in the dead of night, the scouts wandered up and down the streets and lanes of the camp, to see that there was no disorder and no talking ; how as they crossed and recrossed each other’s path they interchanged in a whisper

the watchword, *The Faith hath conquered*; how at midnight, at the third, and at the sixth hour the clarions and trumpets blew out together, and the departing and relieving watch betook themselves to or from their task with the sign of the Cross. So, in that wild country, the sentinels saw one constellation after another travel down the sky, and set behind the Gallic mountains; they saw the Alps brightening into pink, while all was yet dark and cheerless in the valleys below; they watched the rays of the sun descending the mountain side, over crag and glacier and playful cataract; they heard the camp wake up to life, while armour was cleaned, and fires kindled, and the *prandium* served to the soldiers.

It was the second hour. The sun was shooting his brightest rays into the huge ravines of the Alps; the apple-gatherers were piling their baskets with the ripe red fruit of the valley of the Rhone; the smithies in the camp were ringing out with their daily toil, when one shrill blast of the *lituus* sounded from the *principia*. In a moment all was bustle. From every quarter of the camp centurions were

pacing onwards to the head-quarters ; and in a short time, eighty or ninety soldiers, many of them well-scarred veterans, were gathered in the Quæstorium, the open space to the left hand of the tents of the tribunes. Here towered aloft the Eagle of the Legion, with the S. P. Q. R. that was its legend : here also were the images of the Emperors, with the inscription : “ Diocletian and Maximian, pious, pacific, victors, ever Augusti.” To these images, as each centurion passed, he did obeisance.

After a delay of a few minutes the six military tribunes, the Præfect of the Wing, and other officers, advanced from the Quæstor’s tent ; and three of them, Maurice, Exuperius, and Candidus, mounted a kind of platform that had been rudely put together. When there was silence after the applause with which they had been greeted, Maurice spoke :

“Soldiers,” said he, “we yesterday received an epistle from the ever victorious and most pious Augustus, whom God preserve ! now at Octodurus. This epistle, Centurions and Optiones, we think fit, in the first place, thus publicly to read, that afterwards the sense

of the army, which can in no wise be expressed better than by you, may be taken thereupon. And it is as follows :

“ Maximian, Emperor, to the Tribunes of the Theban Legion, greeting. Whereas it hath been represented to us that in divers parts of Gallia Cisalpina, and the Province, and more especially at Brigantium and Caseraria, and Augusta Prætoria, the abominable sect of the Nazarenes hath very widely extended itself : Now we, being minded to purge out such execrable miscreants from the earth, do hereby give you commission and charge to detach parties from the legion in search of them ; whom, being found, you shall not fail to render to us here, to be punished according to their deserts. Farewell.

“ Given at Octodurus, the seventeenth of the kalends of October, Marcus Lateranus, Caius Cassius, Consuls.

“ Thus,” proceeded Maurice, “ ye have heard the epistle : and first I desire, both in my own name, and that of my fellow-tribunes to declare what, God helping us, we intend to do in this

matter. It is true that, in all lawful things, we are to obey the Augustus, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake. Yet must we not forget that we are soldiers, not only of the emperor, but of Him That is King of kings; lest, being found too faithful to the one, we should be denied by the Other in that Day. We are therefore fully resolved, if this famous and victorious legion should consent to yield obedience to this mandate, to repair with all speed to the Augustus, and there, laying down our commissions at his feet, to declare why we neither may nor will render him obedience in this matter. But if—which God, best and greatest, grant!—this legion, as true soldiers of CHRIST, are minded to bear all things rather than to betray Him, we are ready to stand by it, directing, counselling, and aiding to the last; taking to ourselves, as is fit, the post of danger, and first exposing ourselves to the anger of the Augustus. Wherefore it is on this matter that ye are to give your advice. *Primipilus*, what is your counsel?"

The first centurion, a stout, grey-headed old veteran, stepped forward, and said,—“ I obey

not the emperor's mandate." And he fell back to his place.

"Centurion of the second century of the first maniple, speak."

A younger soldier came forth, and said with a Greek accent,—“I agree in all things with Auxentius.”

“First centurion of the second pile, your voice in this matter.”

“I obey God rather than man,” replied he.

And so, through several more centuries did Maurice put the question. And now the veteran *triararii* had all spoken by their centurions; and the tribunes, proceeding to the *Principes*, began:

“First Princeps, give your judgment.”

For the first time there was a hesitation. The centurion, keeping himself behind his comrades, said, in a low and undecided voice, “The matter craves good counsel. It is ill openly to contradict an Augustus.”

“No, no!” was the general shout. “We all say with the tribunes! We all say with the *primipilus*! No *traditor*; the army speaks by us!”

When order was a little restored, Maurice proceeded :—" Since, then, soldiers, ye, acting worthily both of the Roman and of the Christian name, are minded to resist this ungodly mandate of the Augustus, is it your will that I should read an epistle which the tribunes have drawn up, in answer to that ye have now heard ?" And after the shouts of " Read it !" " We will hear it !" were composed, Maurice read as follows :—

" The tribunes and centurions of the legion called the Theban, to Maximian emperor, greeting. We have received, Lord, the imperial mandate, which orders us to make search for all Christians in Gallia Cisalpina, and the Province, and having apprehended them, to bring them before you. We confess that we are your soldiers, but we are also the servants of God. We owe to you military service, but to Him innocence. We receive from you our pay, but from Him we have received our life. He, even though you own Him not, is your LORD as well as ours. We offer our services to you, as up to this time we

have done, against all enemies whatsoever : but we can never consent to stain our hands in the blood of the innocent. We were sworn to God before we were sworn to you ; and if we were to break our first oath, what confidence could you have that we should not likewise perjure ourselves as touching our second ? You command us to make search for Christians, that they may be punished. We ourselves are Christians. We confess GOD the FATHER, and His SON JESUS CHRIST ; send others, therefore, to apprehend us. We have arms, but we will offer no resistance ; because we had rather die with innocence, than live with guilt. Farewell.

“From the stationary camp at Agaunum, the sixteenth of the kalends of October, Marcus Lateranus, Caius Cassius, Consuls.”

There was a general murmur of applause from the assembled centurions.

“If then,” pursued Maurice, “it is your pleasure that this reply should be forwarded to the Augustus, I, if it seem good to you, will charge myself with it.”

But here there were expressions of dissent. The older centurions conferred together; and then Auxentius, stepping forward, said, "Excellent Tribune, we well know that you are willing to peril yourself to the uttermost for our sakes; but you will best serve the army by remaining in the camp. Whoever bears this epistle will very hardly return. Now, in the sore straits to which it seemeth to be God's pleasure that we should fall, we shall need, above all things, your counsel and your aid; so also that of the other excellent tribunes will be necessary. This being so, I claim to offer myself, as centurion of the first pile, to be the bearer of the reply."

There were acclamations of applause from the centurions; and when the tribunes had consulted together for some minutes, Maurice said, "Be it so, then, worthy *primipilus*; and the God Whom we serve either protect you hither in safety, or give you grace to magnify Him before the emperor. But no time must be lost in this matter. It is as much as can be done if, by this evening, the Augustus receives our reply; and that cannot be effected without great exertion."

"I am ready at once," said Auxentius; "I lack but a horse."

"Take mine, then, *primipilus*," cried Exuperius; "he is fleetest in the legion."

"And I will fasten the epistle," said Maurice. He folded it, tied a coarse thread round it, stamped it with his own signet-ring, the ✠ and gave it into the hands of the *primipilus*.

In less than half-an-hour, Auxentius rode out at the Prætorian gate, and struck northward through the lovely valleys of Valais. The sun poured a hotter and hotter flood of radiance into that which is now called the *Val d'Entremont*; the grasshopper shrilled merrily at the road side; the leaf of the oak and the elm fell silently to wither by their fallen companions; and still the unwearied centurion pressed forward. At mid-day he stopped to refresh his horse and himself at that which is now *Orsieres*. The shadows were lengthening as he crossed the bridge that then, as now, spanned the Drance, and lighted a moment on the further side to rest his beast. At Burgum, now *Bourg*, the fires flashed brighter from many a cottage, for twilight was gathering

upon the mountains; and with the last gleam of day he spurred up the steep ascent that led into Octodurus.

The palace then temporarily occupied by Maximian was like the country house of any rich patrician. At the vestibule the centurion dismounted, and inquired of the sentinel whether he could have an audience of the emperor.

"Not to-night, by Mars!" replied the soldier. "He has just come down to a banquet. But what is your business?"

"I bear despatches from the tribunes of the legion at Agaunum," answered Auxentius.

"What! the Nazarene legion?" cried the other. "They will look to you within. Lead your horse to the vestibule, and wait."

Auxentius did as he was desired, and found himself in a kind of garden square, fronted by the house and its portico, and laid out in formal clumps of planes and laurels. A porter made his appearance, and bidding him go in, led his horse round to the stables of the palace, while the new comer himself was committed to the charge of the *atriensis*, the hall slave.

It was a trial of bitter mocking that Auxen-

tius endured, as he sat that night in the guard-room of the palace, with the centurions and soldiers not actually on duty around it. All the vile stories that heathenism invented against the Church,—all the foul reproaches that Roman writers could heap upon it,—these were retailed, enlarged, improved. Many a tale of Maximian's cruelty, and the patient suffering of his victims, was told as an excellent joke; and though the Great Tenth persecution, in which, if it had been possible, the elect would have fallen away, had not yet begun, there were times either of frenzy among the people, or cruelty in the magistrates, to yield stories that might well be terrifying even to a Roman centurion. He heard of torments that had never entered his imagination, of agonies that seemed past the power of human nature to endure; but he also heard how feeble women and girls had triumphed over them. And steadfastly fixing his eyes on Him Who, "when He putteth forth His own sheep, goeth before them," he endured that dreadful evening with hope and patience.

They showed him his soldier's couch, in a small chamber opening from the guard-room;

for the *primipilus* of a legion, Christian though he were, was not a person to be treated with disrespect; and they promised that they would tell the emperor of his errand, as soon as he should be at leisure to attend to business on the following morning.

And so, notwithstanding the loud laugh or occasional quarrel in the hall of the guards, —notwithstanding the sounds of music and revelry from the banqueting room above, the brave centurion, when he had committed himself to God, and fortified himself with the sign of the Cross, lay down to rest.

And there, for this evening, I will end my story. By all these faithful servants, I am trying to lead your thoughts to their Great Master; by what they suffered for Him, to what He, as at this time, suffered both for us and for them. Think what must be the merits of His Passion, when by it His followers were enabled so gloriously to triumph in their own!



Good Friday.

THE THEBAN LEGION.

Continued.

YOU may well imagine the fearful suspense of the Christian camp during the day on which Auxentius was riding to Octodurus. Little heart had the soldiers for their military exercises; little heart had the foragers for bringing in provisions; for none could tell how soon he might be called to that place where there shall be no more war, and where there is no need to labour for the meat that perisheth. The tribunes went hither and thither through the camp, exhorting all to play the man for CHRIST's sake. Now they reminded the grey-headed old veteran that all the honours he had

ever gained in the service of the Republic (for still they spoke of Rome as a Republic) were as nothing to that of which he might now, and that very shortly, be counted worthy; now they congratulated the young recruit on the likelihood that he would receive the Crown so early in the battle; and to all they spoke of the marvellous honour which God had, in the old times, gotten Himself in His servants, called to contend unto blood for His Name's sake. "What!" they said, "have weak old men—men that had never in all their lives seen danger, trodden this path before us; and are we, soldiers from our youth, to shrink from it? Men, said I? Why, delicate women, girls who had never before left their mothers, nay, even infants, have stood unmoved before the tribunal, have faced the foe, the wild beasts, the rack, without trembling. And this they did, out of weakness being made strong. God grant that we may not disgrace His Name, and His Church, and ourselves, by falling away from Him, and denying the LORD That bought us!"

And so that day wore away. The peaks of

the Alps again grew crimson in the sinking sun ; the watch was again set ; the camp fires were lighted ; the valley of the Rhone settled into peace ; and while Auxentius was resting in the palace of Octodurus, his brave brethren at arms were better reposing under the shadow of the great mountains. But one Arm was around them all ; over him that went to face the rage of a tyrant, and them that tarried at home, ready to endure the worst from his commands.

It was towards the evening of the second day that Maurice, with two of the other tribunes, Exuperius and Candidus, were pacing up and down the *Via Quintana*, much as at the beginning of my story.

"I marvel much," said Candidus, "that we have received no tidings of our messenger. By my reckoning, he must have reached Octodurus by the tenth or eleventh hour yesterday ; and if the Augustus had the least thought of what his errand was, most surely he would have had instant audience."

"Most certainly," replied Maurice, "it is not his wont to sleep in such matters. But

the emperor may be minded to visit us himself. I have known him take such sudden resolutions."

"Some message we shall have ere nightfall," said Exuperius; "of that I feel most certain. Or if not, it can only be that Auxentius was delayed by some mishap on his journey."

"The soldiers are quite resolved," observed Maurice. "I have spoken to many to-day; but I have not found so much as even one waverer."

"It is easy to be courageous at a distance," said Candidus again; "but I well trust it may be as you say. But here comes one of my *optiones*. How now, good fellow?"

"May it please you," said the soldier, "there is a small party of horsemen on the brow of the hill, as if from Octodurus, and they seem in haste."

"Let us to the gate on that side," cried Maurice. "You could not distinguish them, I suppose?"

"They are too far off as yet," replied the *optio*.

"Pass the word through your quarters,"

continued Maurice, as they were on their way to the *porta principalis sinistra*, "that the men be under arms, and let the *tesserarius* meet me at the gate; it lacks very little to sunset. Now," he added, as the soldier went off, "we shall soon know the issue. This party, belike, will consist of officers from the court. I marvel if Auxentius be among them."

For Maurice knew not that the brave centurion was even then standing in the presence of a greater King than Maximian; that his companions were no longer rough legionaries or crafty courtiers, but Cherubim and Seraphim, and the Martyrs of other ages.

The tidings had spread through the camp like wildfire; and the soldiers, in the doors of the various streets and plats of tents, made military reverence to the tribunes as they passed along, and then stood curiously regarding them till they were out of sight. And now Maurice and his companions have reached the end of the *Via Quintana*; and are in the broad space between the extreme tents, and the mound and fosse that formed the walls of the camp. Here the air came

keener, and the grass was less trodden; the autumn sorrel shivered on the embankment, the wind whistled through the fern, the sky was overcast, the camp in shade, and the distant mountains in deep gloom. The bright summer tints of the day before had faded away, and the officers drew their *paludamenta* more closely round them as they strode onward.

Any one who has loved to wander, towards evening, in the pleasant deep lanes, or the upland fields, or the great downs, or the lonely commons of our country, knows very well that, just as the sun touches the horizon, there is a chill damp feeling in the air,—a kind of horror over the face of the earth,—which, as soon as he has fairly set, passes off again. It is something like a good man's death; the time that leads to it may not be gloomy; the eternity that follows it will be, as the old Church hymn says,

“The calm bright evening that shall last;”

but still, the act of dying will, to those that have bodies of sin, necessarily be dreadful.

Well: there was just this horror of the

sunset over mountain and valley, as the three tribunes arrived at the northern gate of the camp. Here the mound was interrupted, and the ditch filled up; but a large heap of stakes was piled at hand, to be used as a barricade in case of any sudden attack.

"Are they close, Niger?" inquired Exuperius, as they came up to the sentinel.

"Not thirty yards off, an it please you," replied he. And accordingly, when they reached the gateway, the tribunes saw the advancing party close to the camp. It consisted of about twenty horsemen. The leader, from the rich trappings of his steed, was evidently a man of importance; and as he drew rein, and some of his followers leapt to the ground, Candidus said in a low voice, "It is Julius Afer, the master of the household."

"So," said Afer, as he descended from his horse, "we have made a good day's journey, I think. Septimius, you will see that a tent is pitched for us here: I will not go to the *principia*: and look that the tribunes of the legion be forthcoming."

"Most excellent Afer," said Maurice, advancing, "they would ill have shown their duty to the Augustus, if when they had been told of the approach of a party from Octodurus, they had not been at the gate with such offers of observance as are due from such a legion to such an emperor."

"And who may you be?" inquired Afer, rudely: though the tribune's military dress sufficiently answered the question.

"I have the honour to be the tribune in command: my name Quintus Mauritius. These are my colleagues, Pedius Exuperius, and Lucius Candidus."

"Then, tribunes, if such you were," replied the master of the palace, "I have to announce to you that you are so no longer. The gross insult which you, by a messenger, have offered to the Augustus in his very palace—the open rebellion of this legion—deprives you of your rank; I will read the emperor's letter anon."

"Now, and at all times," said Maurice, "shall we submit ourselves, as in duty bound, to the sovereign will of the Augustus; saving

only in such particulars as our duty to our God requires us to disobey him. To you, therefore, as soon as we shall be officially informed of the emperor's will, we will resign our offices. If, as you have reported, we had insulted the Augustus, no punishment would be beyond our deserts. But we did this only: we——"

"I will pray you," said Afer, "to hold your peace. I came not hither that I might hear rebellion justified; but that I might punish it."

"At least thus much," cried Candidus: "if this famous legion were in rebellion, your own prudence, Julius Afer, would teach you, that thus with twenty men to enter it on a hostile intent, would be nothing short of madness."

Afer turned pale; he had no great reputation for courage, and was for a moment silent. At length, turning to his principal attendant, "Septimius," he said, "cause proclamation to be made that the legion meet me, unarmed, in the *procestria*, (the space without the camp,) at the second hour to-morrow.

For you, sirs,"—to the tribunes—"we excuse your further attendance this evening. You will be answerable for the order of the camp to-night, and to-morrow we trust to have such forces with us as shall relieve us and the Augustus from all possible fears, either of your treachery, or of its ferocity. Nay,—not a word. Septimius, have they pitched my tent?"

"It is even now ready, my lord." And without another word Afer turned from the officers of the legion, and betook himself to his quarters, just without the *porta principalis*.

That is a night much to be remembered in the annals of the Church. From the whole of that legion a mighty cry went up to God that He would now, if ever, strengthen them to endure the worst; that not one soldier might be so far tempted by promises, or terrified by threats, as to forget "the promise that He hath promised us,—even eternal life;" as to lose sight of that time when them that have denied Him He also will deny. And doubt not that He, Whose Passion we have been on this most holy day following, to Whose Cross these brave soldiers looked, as we must look,

for strength ; to Whose unconquerable wounds they fled, as we must fly, for salvation ;—doubt not that He was preparing some of His many mansions to receive them, and enduing them with the HOLY GHOST, that they might merit to enter therein.

The clouds had rolled off ; the sky was flooded with the light of the full moon ; the brightest stars were faint in her glory ; the Alps towered from the southern horizon with a ghostly splendour ; and the white tents glowed, to the eye of the far-off shepherd, like a flock, larger and more beautiful than his own. But at that very hour, along the road from Octodurus, the twenty-fourth legion, surnamed *Victrix*, was hurrying forward in a forced march. The baggage being left behind, one weary hour after another this legion, that boasted never to have been conquered, pressed steadily onward,—allies of the right wing, as the custom was, first ; legionary soldiers in the midst ; allies of the left wing in the rear. Through the dangerous mountain-pass, where the moonlight and the shade made a wild fret-work of imaginary forms,—across the shallow

stream that, when the sun had set, ran clear as crystal, and when morning dawned, had been trodden into a muddy swamp,—by the old chestnut wood, whose thinned leaves made sad melody to the midnight wind,—over the bare bleak heath, where the peasant dreaded to pass, lest some wandering Faun might strike him,—still, still the legion advanced. The cottager of Ad Fines raised his head from the log that served as his pillow, and listened to the wail of the clarions, and the tramp of the passing thousands; the deer in the skirts of the Pennine forest snuffed the breeze, and fled far into its wildest recesses; the mother who was keeping watch over her dying baby in Salioclita, hushed more tenderly its parting moans, as the whirlwind of men swept by, and prayed that the Fates would speedily cut its thread. In the mean time the *Legio Victrix*, careless of the scenes of peace or sorrow through which it was pressing, was drawing nigh to Agaunum.

Do you remember, my little one, how we have, on a summer's evening, gone up to the top of our church tower, and watched the

hills, as they put on one shade of blue after another,—how calm, how peaceful, how like to the very barriers of Paradise they looked? And do you remember also how, when I first took you over them, you were disappointed to find them bleak, and rough, and jagged, and could scarcely believe that what at a distance seemed so heavenly, could indeed be, when seen close, so common and so earthly? Well, in like manner it fared with the soldiers of the Theban Legion. They had heard, all of them, of the mighty works that God had wrought in their fathers' days, and in the old time before them. The martyrdoms of former years had come down to them, arrayed in a light and a glory which almost transfigured the suffering and the shame attendant on them. But now that some of themselves were coming down to the Red Sea, and their feet were upon the very brink of it, they began to feel how cold were its waters, and how fearful its shore to flesh and blood. In such a vast multitude, all were not equally earnest followers of the LAMB. Some, undoubtedly, had defiled the white robes of their baptism. I

am telling you of wonderful and most holy times, but I am not telling you of impossibilities. Doubtless some soldiers even in that ever-famous legion had need of the exhortation, Remember from whence thou hast fallen, and repent. And now God gave to all one glorious opportunity of retrieving past errors, and with the opportunity He gave the will to embrace it. On the greater part He bestowed the grace of perseverance; on the others that of repentance.

By daylight a report had spread through the camp that the *Legio Victrix* had arrived from Octodurus; and when the water-glasses had measured out the second hour, proclamation was made that the soldiers of the Theban Legion were, unarmed, to attend on Julius Afer, the master of the palace, and Quintus Pescenninus, proconsul of Gallia Belgica, tribune of the twenty-fourth legion, and twice imperator.

Let us see what that scene really was.

A bright, breezy day. One or two soft clouds, embracing with their white arms, the black, rough peaks of the Alps; one or two, as if disdaining any touch of earth, dancing

gaily through the blue and immeasurable sky. On the short, green turf, a dark mass of men, drawn up in line of battle; the silver eagle glittering in the midst of the first rank; the standards of the maniples—a hand rising from a crossed pole—interspersed here and there in the array; the green banner of the cavalry fluttering in the wind; the sun flashing on brazen *thorax* or iron *lorica*, on the boss of the shield and the crest of the helmet; stern, savage faces of veterans, to whom death and life were as one long game of dice;—this on the one side. On the other, an unarmed mass of men, clad only in the dark military *sagum*, disposed, not army-wise, but as a mere crowd; and between the two bodies a raised platform, whereon stand the master of the palace, and Quintus Pescenninus.

Is that all the scene, imagine you?

I think not. I think that, if we could look into the boundless sky, we should see chariots of fire and horses of fire, ready to carry the souls of the victors to glory; we should see palms and crowns prepared for them that overcome; we should see martyrs and confessors

witnesses of the conflict in which they once shared; we should see,—O sight consoling beyond all sights!—the Captain of our salvation, the Most Mighty, girding on His sword upon His thigh, according to His worship and renown, to do battle with the Prince of Darkness. Thus very safely we may abide the issue of the struggle between the unarmed servants of CHRIST, and the armed and blood-thirsty host of persecutors. If God be for them, who can be against them?

There was deep silence; and Afer spoke. He repeated what had been the emperor's command. He related the refusal which the legion had returned to it; he dwelt on the obedience due from soldiers to the Augustus; and then he burst forth into a paroxysm of indignation against the Christian superstition. "What!" he cried, "incur the indignation of the emperor, disgrace, and shame, and death, for old women's fables and impossible lies? What! forsake the immortal and most blessed gods, the guardians of the republic and of the earth, under whose auspices Rome hath become the mistress of nations, and the queen of

the world,—by whose assistance her legions overthrew Hannibal, and Pyrrhus, and Mithridates,—who led us to victory at Zama, and by the Lake Regillus! forsake the king of gods and men, and father Mars and the other celestial divinities, for the execrable mysteries of the ass's head, and the worship of a malefactor crucified in Judæa? Their honour indeed shall last for ever; their praise shall be sung as long as the Pontiff shall ascend the capitol with the silent virgin. It is but a passing madness that has seized the world, and, by the evil influence of some malevolent god, hath infected this legion. But it cannot be that you should persevere in such frenzy. Return to us; return to your brothers in arms. We will receive you joyfully; all the past shall be forgotten; the Augustus will forgive everything; we will proclaim military games, and provide a banquet for both legions. The wisest and bravest men may err, but they may also retrieve their errors. In this there is no shame. I come to you, soldiers, however at the moment unlike soldiers, with the emperor's commands; will you obey

them? Answer me by your tribunes. I have said."

Afer sat down in the *curule* chair, and the *Legio Victrix* clashed their arms, and loudly applauded. After a moment's pause, Maurice stepped forth.

"Most excellent Afer," said he, "there would indeed be no shame in our renouncing error, and accepting the truth; but shame there would be now, and unutterable confusion hereafter, if, having received the truth, we were afterwards to forsake it for error. The fewest words are the best: in all things wherein, as Christians, we can yield obedience to the emperor, we are ready and eager to obey him,—in all things wherein, as Christians, we cannot obey him, as now, we refuse for one moment to give place to his commands."

"Is this the sentence of the legion?" inquired Afer; and the deep hum that rolled around him testified that it was. He conferred for a minute with Pescenninus; and then, turning to a man who, clad in the usual costume of a Roman citizen, stood below, said, "Scribe, read the emperor's epistle."

The man whom he had addressed mounted the platform, and read as follows :—

“Maximian emperor to Julius Afer, greeting. Whereas we have been informed that the legion now in winter quarters at Agaunum, infected with the Christian madness, hath refused obedience to our just commands; we charge you to repair with all speed to the said quarters, and reduce them to our obedience. And for your further assistance herein, we have commanded Quintus Pescenninus, with the twenty-fourth legion, to be at your orders. And if those rebellious soldiers will, at your exhortation, return to their duty, we, of our mere clemency, will remit their due punishment. But if they continue obstinate, our will and pleasure is that the legion be DECIMATED. Farewell.

“Given at Octodurus, the fifteenth of the Kalends of October.”

“Where we are but called to suffer,” said Exuperius, “there our law teaches us to obey. And answer me this, Julius Afer—is there any

other legion in the Roman armies that would, without resistance, obey such a command? It is true you are supported by the twenty-fourth legion, and I undervalue not their courage; but, if my eye deceives me not, we outnumber them. We are fresh, while they are weary; and, unarmed though we be, our arms are piled at hand. By this very command you own the majesty of the example which He set us, Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again, and when He suffered, He threatened not."

"Silence!" said Afer. "Centurions and optiones of the *Victrix*, do as you have been commanded."

The dreadful preparations were soon made. The officers and some of the veterans of the twenty-fourth legion assembled in front of the platform of which I have already told you. They were armed with swords, javelins, and daggers. Two posts were fixed in the ground, at about the width of an ordinary door. By each of these stood an armed soldier; while another, with a truncheon in his hand, placed himself rather behind, to number off the victims as they passed through the fatal space.

Eight or ten slaves were stationed behind him, to drag off the bodies of the martyrs.

In the mean time a short, earnest cry went up to God from every soldier in the Theban Legion. None knew but that the tenth man's post might be his; none could tell how soon he might stand before the judgment-seat.

Afer rose. "Soldiers," he said, "it is not just that all of you should suffer for the fault of many. Those of you who are willing to renounce your execrable superstition will, when the time comes for you to advance, step aside from the line, and touch yonder standard." And he gave orders to a centurion to pitch one at a short distance. "Of such an one, not a hair of his head shall be hurt. Those who rush on their fate must take the risk of decimation." And he sat down.

A few more minutes, and everything being prepared, a trumpet sounded, and the centurion who stood by the standard said, "Soldiers, advance, one by one; pass between the posts, and form in lines fifty deep two hundred paces beyond."

None could tell which number of the ten

would be that of death—whether, for example, the first, eleventh, and twenty-first; the second, twelfth, and twenty-second,—or how otherwise the bloody sacrifice would be ordered. Maurice, speaking to those about him, said, “Comrades, it behoves me to lead you to this holy war. Those who shall not pass yonder barrier will be the happier. To the rest I say, if it be with my last breath, Stand firm, and remember whose soldiers ye are.”

So speaking, he advanced towards the posts, firmly believing himself a marked man, and uttering in his heart the words, “LORD JESUS, receive my spirit!” But as he passed between the ministers of death, not an arm was raised against him; and the Christian soldiers rejoiced and thanked God as they saw him issue forth again, and take his place at the appointed station.

Exuperius came next. He was a younger man than the first tribune; he had also been a shorter time a Christian, and there was a fierceness in his step and bearing that had no place in Maurice. His eye glanced at Afer as he passed along the platform; and then resigning

himself into God's hands, he stepped between the executioners. But his hour was not yet come ; and he also issued forth unhurt.

Candidus was arranging his soldiers, and exhorting them to be valiant for the truth. The third, therefore, who came to the barrier was an old soldier, Valens, a Christian from his childhood—one who had seen the persecution of Maximus, and had received the Seal of the LORD from S. Gregory the Wonderworker. He looked neither to the right hand nor to the left, but stepped steadily to the passage : he also went through unharmed.

Now comes Acilius Stator, a young centurion of good fortune, who had bought his office. He was talking much last night of suffering all things, rather than obeying an unjust command ; but it needs scarcely a glance to see that now fearfulness and trembling are come upon him, and a horrible dread hath overwhelmed him. Once or twice he looks to the standard where apostates were safe ; the bystanders even once thought that he made a side motion to leave his comrades. But the soldier behind him, his own *optio*, pronounced a single

word, and it was this—VINCENTI, (to the conqueror.) Acilius hears it, enters the range, and makes its passage in safety.

Yes! that *optio* might well speak of the reward promised to the conqueror. A Gaul he was by birth; he had seen, at Sens, the holy virgin Columba render up her blessed soul to God; he had heard the last words of S. Savinian, when, like a true Bishop, he fell for the faith at Troyes,—and of S. Reverian, when he also, as a good shepherd of his people, received the crown of martyrdom at Autun. And as he followed Acilius, there was such a joy and serenity in his countenance, that men gazed on him as if they were fixing their eyes on an angel.

He has reached the passage—one foot is within it—when the two veterans between whom he is passing raise their right hands at once, and their daggers clash within his breast. He falls on one knee; and then the sweep of a centurion's sword sends him to the joy of his Master.

But we will not follow this scene of slaughter. All stood firm to Him that

bought them,—all perilled their lives for His sake; and when that day's work was ended, more than six hundred of His champions had fallen for His Name.

The bitterness of death was past. They who could risk so much for Him, might well be counted worthy of His glory. A second decimation had no terrors for the men who had passed bravely through the first.

One more scene, and I have done.

It was the twenty-second of September, A.D. 285. Had we stood on one of the heights near Agaunum, we should have seen and heard what at first sight would have seemed a battle-field—shouts, and flashing of swords, and the sound of trumpets, and the fall of soldiers, and officers spurring hither and thither, and standards flying high above the tumult. But where are the cries of the wounded? where is the swaying backwards and forwards of the line of battle? where the hand-to-hand conflict? where the flyers and the pursuers?

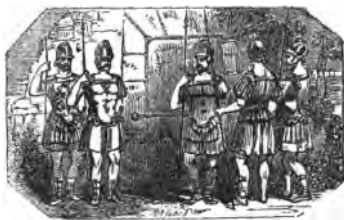
No; this is no earthly battle. A tremendous conflict indeed there is; for the LORD of Hosts has gone to war. But to human

sight there is no struggle, for there is no resistance. Two armed and fierce legions are massacring, in cold blood, the Christian troop. And these true soldiers of CHRIST give up their lives without defence. Tens upon tens, hundreds upon hundreds, they were cut down; but they offered no opposition, they uttered no cry. To a man they fell for their LORD; and doubt not but that, in the house of Him they loved, there was room enough for them, and to spare. The pit where their dead bodies were cast was never hallowed by the Church for them; the place where they await the LORD's coming is now a wild and desolate moor; but it had a nobler consecration than any earthly rite could give, in the blood of such innumerable martyrs, S. Maurice and his companions.

And now I will tell you how the Church in whose land they fell—the old Church of France—praised God for such triumphs of grace, in one of the many prefaces to her Communion office:—

“It is meet and right, just and salutary, that we should praise Thee, Consubstantial

TRINITY, Undivided Majesty of one Essence, GOD the FATHER, the SON, and the HOLY GHOST, the Fountain of eternal blessedness, Who needest the praise of no creatures, through Whom Thy most blessed martyrs conquered the errors of the world by wisdom, its terrors by patience. Mighty, therefore, and wonderful is the work that they wrought. Following the Lamb, they vanquished the lion. When the persecutor assaulted them, the lion raged. But because they set their eyes on the Lamb above, they overcame the lion below. For they earnestly gazed on Him that by death conquered death, hung on the tree, poured forth His Blood, redeemed the world; to Whom, as is meet, angels and archangels cease not daily to cry, thus saying, Holy, holy, holy, LORD GOD of Sabaoth: heaven and earth are full of the majesty of Thy glory. Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is He That cometh in the Name of the LORD. Hosanna in the highest. Holy, holy, holy, LORD GOD."





Easter Eve.

THE MOUNTAIN LIGHTS.

CIRC. 970.

THIS is a day of rest. As the sufferings of our dear LORD are now over, neither will I at this time speak to you of those of His servants. I will rather tell you of the deliverance He afforded one of His saints from his earthly enemies; even as at this season He was preparing to set us free from our ghostly adversaries.

Far, far away then in time I must take you from my last story; far away in time, though we shall remain nearly in the same place.

Seven hundred years had passed since those valiant soldiers entered into the joy of their

LORD. Down one of the passes of what was still called the highest of the Pennine Alps, (and which is now named the Great S. Bernard,) and right above what once had been the winter station at Agaunum, three persons might have been seen advancing. It was a fitful October night; now pitch dark, with driving scuds of rain; now, for a second, the waning moon rolled as it were a haze of glory over the mountains; and then, again, the roar of the gale was heard afar off, the thick, black clouds swept on, and all was dark once more.

They were three Cluniac monks that on this fearful night were pursuing their journey. One, a tall, spare man, with an eagle eye, in the prime of life; that is S. Majolus, afterwards Abbat of the great monastery of Cluny. The second is much younger, and plainly, by his words and dress, a servitor. The third, whom both his companions are assisting, as the path is rougher or steeper, a very aged man, drooping, it seems, with fatigue, and almost worn out.

“Cheer up, my brother!” said Majolus,

cheerfully. "God hath not so wonderfully delivered us from these robbers, that, after all, they should again make us their prisoners."

"But, good brother," replied Chrodegang, for that was the old man's name, "my knees fail me more and more; even with all your help can I hardly hold myself up. You two shall behold Cluny again, but I, never!"

"Hold out but a little further," cried Majolus, "and we will find some place where we may rest. But this be sure of—that if you cannot go further, neither will I. Suitbert has licence to do what seems him good."

"No, good father," said Suitbert; "God do so unto me, and more also, if I forsake you!"

"Nay, brother,—nay, my son," said the old man, "let me not be a burden to you. My work is all but done; but you may serve Holy Church for many a long year. Let be, let be, I pray you! The men of Belial must be close behind us. Bethink you not how we saw them skirting yonder ridge, as the clouds rolled off!"

Majolus answered not ; he seemed earnest in prayer. But Suitbert said,

“They must indeed be near us, good father, and for that very reason I will pray you to make but one effort more. If we can but hold on till we come to but the unlikeliest place of hiding, in so dark a night they may well pass us by.”

Thus urged, Chrodegang again put forth all his strength. There was indeed no hope of concealment where they then stood. The pass road was scarcely four feet broad ; a blank wall of rock rose on this side ; an unmeasurable precipice sank on the other ; and so, for a hundred yards farther, they still pursued their way.

“It is useless,” at length said the old monk, sinking down. “I am in God’s hands ; but I can go no further. I pray you both to fly.”

“Then here I remain too, my father,” said Suitbert ; “and God give us grace cheerfully to suffer all He shall send.”

“Be of good cheer, brother ; and you, my son,” said Majolus, “be of good cheer :

not a hair of your heads shall fall to the ground."

"Ah, my brother!" cried Chrodegang, "God doth not always see fit to deliver His servants in this world."

"He doth not," replied Majolus; "nevertheless, such is His will now. To-night ye shall both see His arm stretched forth for our preservation. But, I pray, move closer to this wall of rock, and leave our pursuers room to pass."

"Alas!" said Suitbert, "there is barely room for them to pass at all, and surely not without touching us."

"Stand still," was the answer of Majolus, "and see the salvation of the LORD." And the three monks accordingly pressed close to the rock, and awaited the issue.

Presently the moon rolled out in glory. And oh! what a scene that is in a mountain country, when alone, at night, in silence, the traveller hangs over such an abyss as they then saw! when no eye can penetrate the mysterious golden haze that boils up from the great depth, and the mind is carried on from

one to another dark and jutting peak, lower and lower, lower and lower still, and the distant voice of the unseen torrent seems to sing its perpetual hymn of praise! But, it was of no such scene that Majolus and his companions then thought. On the ridge of the pass that they themselves had scarcely crossed half-an-hour before, clearly visible in the intense light of the moon, eight or ten of the robbers, into whose hands they had before fallen, and from whom they had made their escape, were hurrying on.

“Is this our confidence, father?” cried Suitbert, half reproachfully.

“Yea, my son, and keep it still. Is God to save us only in the way that pleaseth thee?”

“I believe you, my brother,” said Chrodegang. “Though a host of men were laid against me, yet shall not mine heart be afraid; and though there rose up war against me, in this will I be confident.”

Even as he spoke, the brightness of rock and glen was dimmed. A light scud passed over the moon, and she—like a saint, who can only gain his crown through tribulation—

arrayed it with a halo of brightness. But the clouds rolled thicker and thicker on,—white, grey, black; and a deep darkness settled in over the mountains.

And now they could hear the voices of the pursuers.

“Ware! ware! my mates! we shall miss them in this darkness.”

“I’ll be sworn I saw them from the ridge, a little lower down.”

“Press on, then, and spread out.”

“Ay, ay! If they once get into the bottom we shall miss them.”

“There! there they are! there!” cried Rheinferd, the leader. “On! on at once! the fools, to have lit a torch!”

What was it that made the robber utter that exclamation,—that made him think himself, now at least sure of his prey?

This:—below the place where the monks were standing, and some ten yards farther on, a red, smoky light, like that of a torch, was kindled on a sudden. It passed onwards, at a height of about four feet from the ground, exactly as if carried by some traveller, who,

from the roughness of the road, could not walk steadily.

"After them! after them!" shouted the leader of the robbers. And with the greatest speed that, in such a night, and on such a path they could attempt, the band hurried on. They even brushed against the monks as they passed by; but were far too eager on the light, which seemed almost in their grasp, to heed anything but that. Now it moved on at a quicker pace, and the men of Belial quickened their own steps.

"Said I not, good brother, that God's arm would be stretched out for us?" asked Majolus, quietly.

"O, my father," cried Suitbert, "forgive, I pray you, mine unbelief, and may God also forgive it!"

"Learn, my son," replied Majolus, "that the LORD's arm is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear."

"His Name be praised!" said Chrodegang.
"But what is that shout?"

The light that had preceded the robbers

down the pass, now suddenly turned to the left, and seemed to be mounting the rocks.

“Nay—how—what is that?” cried Rheinferd. “Is there a track there?”

“There is a track,” said one of the men, “that goes towards Argoles and S. Maurice but such an one as he must be a bold cragsman who treads at noonday.”

“Then how can three monks climb it now?” said Rheinferd. “It must be magic.”

“It must be a miracle!” cried another.

“Pooh!” said the leader. “I’ll give it a shot.” And, unstringing his cross-bow, he took steady aim, and the bolt whistled past the light.

“I’ll have no more to do with it,” said one of the men, when the flame still moved on as before. “There is something out of the common in this.”

“Nor I,” “Nor I,” cried others.

“Nor I,” said Rheinferd; “for the chase is not worth the trouble. We shall hardly be back by daylight.”

And again they passed those whom they

were seeking, and were soon on their way up the pass.

“Let us give thanks to God,” said Majolus, as soon as they were gone by; “and then, good brother, you shall rest till daylight.”





Easter Day.

THE FALSE SIGNALS OF RHOSILLY.

1712.

EASTER fell early in the year of grace 1712. It was in the time of the Equinoctial gales; and all that day, from S. Gowan's Head to Barry Island, along the coast of South Wales, there was fierce battle between the everlasting rocks and the great sea. In many a little mountain Church, grey and desolate, scarcely two or three assembled to keep the feast of feasts. The bell in many a pleasant valley rang out almost unheeded. In the seaport towns, men went cautiously along the middle of the street, to avoid the falling tiles and the pouring eaves; in many an upland farm they crowded round the fire, and as the rain drove fiercer

against the lattice, and the wind grappled and growled like an evil beast on the roof, they spoke of the great storm nine years before, and said that there had been nothing like it since. Cloud after cloud poured out its fury on the mountains; Plinlimmon, and Capel-lante, and the Brecon Beacons, and the Black Mountains stood out like champions, wreathed in vapour, and contending with the elements; each puny hill-stream swelled into a dangerous torrent. And, as night closed in over the earth, the roar of winds and waters grew fiercer and wilder.

Nowhere had the storm been more terrible than round the Worm's Head, the south-western point of Glamorganshire. But yet—sorrow and shame that it should have been so!—it was a welcome day to many a fisherman in the village of Rhosilly, which stands just above the cape. *Wrecking* then prevailed in South Wales to a fearful extent. I have heard many and many a story, when I have been talking with some grey-headed old boatman, or farmer, of the snares that were laid for the unfortunate vessels that sailed in those seas. Often, on

stormy nights, a horse, carrying on its back a bright lantern, was driven slowly backwards and forwards upon the high ground, that the captain at sea might think it a ship tacking, and be lured to his destruction. And that rock-bound coast could tell many a tale of violence, ay, and of murder, which shall never be known till the sea gives up her dead: how the wrecked passenger, who had escaped as by miracle, and who thought that now the bitterness of death was past, was murdered on the very shore, lest he should claim any of his property; how men, in the agony of struggling with the waves, were left to perish, when a rope or a coop might have saved them; or beckoned to land where certain to be dashed in pieces on the hard and pointed rocks. These things were done shamelessly and openly. The trade of the wrecker was looked on in the same light as any other trade; and as our labouring men here might pray for a good bark-harvest, or a sunny hay-tide, or a dry August, so there the fisherman were not afraid to ask God for a dark night, a wind on shore, and a rich ship.

You know what a grievous time for the Church of England was the beginning of last century; how worldly were her Priests and Bishops; how her laity sought every man their own, not the things which are CHRIST's; how cold and formal were her services; how much she had the appearance of a withered branch, no longer receiving life from the True Vine, and now ready for the fire. And in the more distant parts of the country, parishes were left almost wholly without care: sometimes the Church was only opened for service every third or fourth Sunday. I have read of three brothers, Priests, who had fifteen parishes between them. I have read of another—and O! how fearful an account he will have to render at that day!—who boasted, after some thirty years' holding a living, that he had never visited a single sick person in his parish. When we think of these things, and then look round us now, we may well say, notwithstanding all the evil that still remains, "The LORD hath done great things for us already, whereof we rejoice."

Well; the village of Rhosilly, which I just

now mentioned, was better off than many. Its Priest was resident in it, and a kind-hearted man to the poor. I fear, indeed, that he had only one service on the Sunday (for no one there thought of having more); I fear that, in his mean, dirty Church, everything was done in the most slovenly manner; I fear that, in hunting season, we should have seen Mr. Lloyd (for that was his name) in his red coat, and as bold a rider as any gentleman in Gower; while his sermons were much such as a heathen philosopher would have preached. But one thing was to his great honour; by every means in his power, whether as a Priest or a magistrate,—for he was, according to that evil system, a magistrate also,—he did what he could against the infamous custom of wrecking. And this at some risk to himself; for the wreckers were not people who would easily bear to be interfered with. He would often preach against it; if ever he heard of a wreck, he would ride down to the sea shore, and give what help he could; and on this account he had brought a great deal of ill-will upon himself.

On that Easter evening, a party of five or

six fishermen were seated round the fire in the tap-room of Rhosilly Inn. The gusts came wilder and more frequent; the trees round the cottage dashed their bare arms against each other; and between each squall the deep voice of the sea, half a mile off, groaned perpetually.

"I call this a rough night, *I* do," observed the landlord, taking his pipe from his mouth.

"Ay, Ned, something like one. If we make nothing out of it, it's too bad," replied Bill Williams, one of the boldest wreckers on the coast.

"I looked out my tools this morning," said the other; "we'll show a light by and by."

"Ay, ay, that's the way to do business. Do you remember the night when the Russell got on Eynon Head?"

"That *was* a clever trick of yours, Bill; you did it so natural-like. I'll be bound that poor fellow of a captain thought himself as safe, with a vessel leading him to leeward, as if he had been in dock. Kate! a glass of half-and-half."

Now I must tell you who Kate was. She was, if you had looked at her, an awkward, untidy girl, of about fourteen; very plain, very ignorant, but sturdy and healthy, and the drudge of the public house. She was a parish orphan, and so had been sent to the *Goat* when quite young. There her master and mistress were tolerably kind to her, though she had plenty of hard words and blows if she happened to find them out of temper. And ignorant indeed she was; she could say the Creed and the LORD's Prayer, and that was as much as she could do. Very seldom was she let go to Church, and then she might have gone anywhere else for aught that any one would have cared; but she acted up to the knowledge she had, and that is the one great thing. An active parish Priest would soon have had his eye on her; Mr. Lloyd only knew her name.

She had several times been employed to carry a lantern on the Worm's Head, because it spared trouble, and she could do it as well as any one. More than once in the dead of the night she had walked backwards and

forwards for two or three hours on the edge of the cliff, thus trying to lure some ship to its destruction, without a thought that she was thus guilty of murder. No one around her saw harm in the practice; and it never entered her mind that there could be. But now this was altered; she had once heard Mr. Lloyd preach a sermon against wrecking, of which she understood very little, but still enough to touch her conscience; and she had once heard him speak to her master against it, when she understood him much better. The landlord swore in a fury that "the meddling parson should never darken his doors again." Kate, ignorant as she was, resolved that, let it cost her what it might, she would never again give her help in the matter.

Yes! the grace of God, acting most mightily where it might least have been expected to act, in weakness was made strong, in ignorance was made wise, and put to shame those who have known their LORD's will, and did it not.

In the mean time, the party at the inn were continuing their stories of wrecks and spoil. Just as it was getting dark, the door opened

suddenly, and a man, dripping with wet, rushed in.

"There's a ship in the offing!" he cried. "It's too hazy to make her well out; but I think we may have her."

"That's well! that's well!" shouted more than one voice.

"Take a glass of grog, Jack," said the landlord, "while I look to my lights." He unlocked a cupboard in the corner of the room, and produced therefrom a kind of dark lantern, furnished with a very strong reflector; brought it to the table, poured in the oil, trimmed the wick, lit it, to see that all was right, and then blew it out.

"Kate!" he said, "on with your hat."

"No," said the last comer, "it's no night for a girl to be out in; one of us had better take it. Why, man, the wind is well-nigh enough to sweep her away from the Head."

"But I tell you she shall go!" cried the landlord, with an oath. "I'll break every bone of her if she don't. Why, we shall want all hands by and by, if she goes on shore."

Kate in the mean while tied on a kind of rough cape, and a Welshwoman's hat, and stood ready to take the lantern.

"Now, you know what to do," said her master. "Go out to the end of the point before you show a light, and then come slowly along the edge of the cliff, moving it up and down a little, you understand, as you go."

"How long am I to stay?" she asked.

"I'll fire a gun when you may come back," answered the landlord. "If the tide should be up before then, you had better go into the hut."

Such an errand, on such a night, might have frightened many a man; but Kate was used to such employment. She took the lantern and set forth. Along the rough lane, through the churchyard, past the strong massy cottages, where the peat fires were throwing out their pungent smell, over the exposed down, on which gale after gale was hurling itself, and so down to the sea shore. For the Worm's Head is, at high tide, an island; but at low water to be reached by a narrow causeway of sand.

I can scarcely imagine a more fearful place, on a stormy night, than that head. On the one side, a sheer black precipice into the sea; on the other, a steep down, stretching to a rocky shore. Along this down, then, Kate was now finding her way; the whole ground seemed to shake with the awful fury of the waves; and every now and then, as some higher billow shattered itself against the wall of rock, the spray was flung up far above the ridge of the cliff, and fell in showers over the down. Now upon the smooth turf, now perilously stepping from rock to rock, almost deafened by the roar of wind, rain, and sea, and breathless and blinded by the driving squall, the poor girl sat down for a minute, where the ground was more sheltered, by the **BLOW HOLE**.

And what is the Blow Hole? you will ask.

In the midst of the down is a small basin of rock, at the bottom whereof is a slit, perhaps six inches in length and two in breadth. This slit communicates with a vast cavern that runs in from the precipice. The sea, as it rolls into this cave, drives the air out through the Blow

Hole, with a sound of which no words of mine can give you any idea. You may lie on the soft turf with your ears at the slit: for a moment all will be silence. Then, as from some untold depth, there is a low moaning sound: it grows hoarser, louder, fiercer: it rumbles, it thunders; till the whole abyss bellows with a roar far surpassing any cannon in intensity, and sometimes to be heard eight miles off. On a sudden it ceases; and then follows a sob. O! such a sob! of such unsurpassed and unspeakable agony! It is, in real truth, simply the re-entrance of the air as the sea retires; but it rings in my ear even now, while I am telling you of it, like one of those expressions of fearful anguish that never can be forgotten. Thus the changes follow each other: the momentary silence, the loud roar, and the sob; thus it has been as long as the traditions of man can go back; and thus probably it will be till the end of all things. Till the reason of this sound was known, the country people looked on the Blow Hole as the mouth of Hell; and I must confess that as I was sitting by it, I seemed to

realise to myself, more than I had ever done before, that fearful verse which tells of the wailing and gnashing of teeth of them that are shut out from the Marriage Supper of the LAMB.

By the Blow Hole, then, poor Kate sat down, and bitterly in that wild night did she cry. She was resolved not to show the lantern as she had been told; but she knew what awaited her if her disobedience should be found out,—the blows she would have to endure, the threats, the ill-usage of all kinds. Is it not wonderful to think that in her, poor ignorant child as she was, God's grace was then bringing forth the same holy fruit as in the great Apostle S. Paul, when he said, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy?" She, indeed, would most likely have known sadly little of what it was that was done for her at her baptism; but it is not by much knowledge that we shall be saved. She listened to the voice of God's SPIRIT then speaking within her; and He, as you will see, rewarded her obedience.

At length she rose and went forward, till she stood as near as she dared to the very point. The cataracts of foam that the sea threw over the ridge, the howl and roar of wind and water, and the gross darkness, prevented her approaching it within fifty yards; so she stood by a pile of wood that was left on the down for the purpose of being kindled, if a beacon should at any time be needed.

Presently, there was a flash of light out at sea, and then the heavy boom of a gun rolled over the waters. At that moment the captain had given himself over for lost: he was driven out of his course; he had seen breakers with the last glimmer of light, and he could, in the crazy state of his vessel, do little but run before the wind. One lighthouse, one beacon, would have been all in all to him.

Kate could not tell this; but she had sense enough to know that a beacon on that point must be of the greatest benefit to any ship out of her course, and ignorant of her reckoning.

"They may kill me if they like," she said; "but I will do it."

Hastily stripping off the covering of furze

with which the beacon was kept dry, she opened the lantern carefully, lest some gust should put out the flame; and, thrusting in a wisp, set the pile alight. At first it seemed doubtful whether it would burn; but by degrees the fire glowed in the inside,—the smoke poured out, one tongue of flame shot up after another, and the whole was in a blaze. Marvellously grand was the ochre-like glare that fell on the bleak down, and on the pillars of foam that dashed up above its ridge. The curlew sailed screaming by it; the sheltered sea to leeward glowed like molten iron; the wind tossed and twisted the blaze into a spire of smoke and flame; and the low, rushing clouds over head reflected the glow.

But none of these things did Kate notice. She knew that the wreckers would be watching, and would see what was done; and then,—what might she not expect from their revenge?

Still, however, she tended the fire; and in an hour it began to burn low. She knew not that in that hour the fate of the vessel was decided; and that now, instead of running on

shore, it was bounding up the channel towards Cardiff. And they that were saved never knew to whom they owed their lives, and that she won their safety for them at the price of her own.

Yes; at the price of her own. Furious at what they then thought the carelessness of their messenger, the landlord and two or three of the wreckers hastened to the Head, and forcing their way with some difficulty over the causeway of sand, over which the tide was then pouring in, they hurried to the point.

What followed was then not known. The men returned, and said that Kate must have fallen over the cliff, for that nowhere could she be found.

Some days after, her body was washed on shore. It was buried at once; and though people did talk a little about a black, deep gash on the forehead, it was but a poor servant girl at an inn, and no further inquiry was made.

But many, many years after, an old man was dying of putrid fever in Caermarthen gaol.

"There's something on his mind, sir," said the gaoler to the Chaplain, as they stood by the heap of straw, which was the bed of many a prisoner in those times; "he's constantly talking about some one he calls Kate."

"Kate! Kate!" cried the dying man, catching at the word. "Mercy, my Lord Judge! mercy, for God's sake! it was not I! it was Bill Williams; he hit her with the boat-hook: I only helped to throw her over. Mercy, my Lord Judge! A long day, then, for God's sake! a long day!"

That is all that I can tell you of the end of poor Kate's course; for this is all that was ever known. But of one thing I am sure, that the spirit which on that cold night left the poor body to be battered by the rocks, and tossed by the sea, was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. And perhaps that fearful death was the only way by which Kate could attain to a crown, that the temptations of her future life would have snatched from her head. If so, O how unspeakably blessed that terror, that anguish, and that murder!—or may I not even say, that martyrdom?





Easter Monday.

THE BATTLE OF AQUILEIA.

SEPTEMBER 6, 394.

WELL met, excellent Eutropius," cried a Tribune of the Fourth Legion, as he spurred his horse at nightfall through Glemona, one of the mountain villages of the Julian Alps. "Well met, indeed! the emperor commands your presence instantly."

"I will ride with you, worthy Volero," replied Eutropius, the famous minister of the great Emperor Theodosius. "Has he shifted his quarters?"

"Ay, about two hours ago, to a farmhouse rather nearer to the mountains. I know not what your excellency deems of it; but, on

my honour, I think that many of us have seen our last sunset."

"God send better things!" cried the chamberlain. "But any fresh news?"

"The enemy knows what he is about," replied Volero. "He is occupying the passes behind us, and cutting off our retreat; and by what I heard as I rode hitherward, the Goths have had success."

I must stop to remind you that the fate of the Roman world hung on the battle about to be fought between Theodosius, Emperor of the East, and Eugenius, the Usurper of the West. Eugenius, indeed, was little more than a tool in the hands of his general, the Frank Arbogastes. This man had murdered Valentinian, the gentle-hearted Emperor of the West, and the brother-in-law of Theodosius. But, as a barbarian, he felt that he could not be safe as Emperor of Rome; and he therefore bestowed the purple on Eugenius, who had taught the art of rhetoric.

In the narrow plain which lies between the eastern Alps and the Adriatic, the two armies were now concentrated. But you must not

imagine that this was a mere war between a just man and a murderer, nor between even a rightful king and an usurper. It was indeed a conflict between heathenism, arrayed for the last time against the Church, and the armies of the LORD of Hosts.

For two years both chiefs had been preparing for the war. Theodosius, the greatest of the emperors, (notwithstanding the one bloody stain on his character,) had made his preparations by prayer, and fasting, and almsgiving; by building Churches; by letting the oppressed go free; by lightening taxes; by making himself, in very truth, the champion of the Church, according to that saying, "Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers." Eugenius, on the other hand, though professing himself a Christian, had sought to win the favour of the Pagans, who abounded in Italy, by restoring their sacrifices, by returning the revenue to their temples, by again setting up the Altar of Victory at Rome, and by carrying the image of Hercules, instead of the ✠, on his banner.

Both emperors had not neglected every effort

in their power to provide troops. But those of Theodosius were the fewer in number,—were less acquainted with the country,—were wearied with the heat and with long marches, and were principally the troops of the East, in no respect to be compared with those of the West. A large body of Goths, with the brave Bacurius, Prince of Iberia, had been pushed forward, however, on the enemy ; and it was of those that we heard Volero even now speaking.

“It may all be very true,” continued Eutropius, presently ; “I am no military man to judge. The fortunes of the emperor, according to the laws of war, may be doubtful ; but we have a surer promise than the laws of war can afford.”

“You mean that Egyptian prophecy, excellent sir. If you would tell me the matter as we go, I should be much beholden to you ; for, serving, as I have done, in Noricum and Dalmatia, it has reached me somewhat brokenly, and, may be, somewhat untruly.”

“Willingly,” replied the chamberlain. “All the world, I suppose, has heard of the famous Egyptian hermit, John of Lycopolis. He has

the gift of miracles, in large measure, but chiefly that of prophecy. Him would Theodosius have at Constantinople, desiring to know the issue of this war."

"And he sent your excellency to beseech his presence, if I have heard the tale rightly," said Volero.

"He did so, sir. I sailed for Alexandria last autumn, and then went up the river to Lycopolis. The cell where the holy man dwells is at the very top of a bleak mountain,—a cavern in a rock. Here they say he has lived—"

"Stand, sir! the word!" cried a sentinel, stepping from the road side, and presenting his javelin.

"*Rebellio fracta*," (rebellion crushed,) replied Eutropius.

"I beg your excellency's pardon; I did not know your excellency," said the man.

"You only did your duty," replied the chamberlain. "Hold! there is half an *aureus* for you. Good night!

"Well, sir," he continued, "this hermit, they say, has never left that cell for fifty years,

—a wild, desolate place as you shall see ; but on the Sabbath and on the LORD'S day he answers the questions of such as consult him : at other times he will see no man. It was on the Sabbath that I first made my way to the shutter which he opened for them that sought his advice. But there was such a crowd of impotent folk who came to him for healing, and so many that had questions to propound to him, that not till the Sunday could my turn be."

"Methinks the emperor's messenger might have had better speed," remarked the tribune.

"What are emperors to *him*, Caius Volero ? Like his Master, he looks not on the outward appearance. It was in vain that I prayed him to leave his cell, and come to Constantinople. 'The emperor,' he said, 'consults me by you ; propose your questions, and begone.' I asked what would be the fate of the war that the Augustus then meditated ? 'Theodosius,' he replied, after the delay of a few minutes, 'will obtain the victory, but it will be a bloody one. He will slay Eugenius, and shortly after that

will himself die in Italy.' Thus I am well assured that rebellion will not prosper."

"His prophecies have been fulfilled in other cases, that is certain," said Volero. "But here comes a messenger, or the dark deceives me. Stand! ho! what news?"

"I seek the Great Chamberlain," said the horseman; "the Council waits for him."

"Why then here he is," replied the tribune.

"I cry your Excellence mercy," said the man. "Here is bad news; the Goths were totally repulsed about the tenth hour: Bacurius was left dead on the field: and all is confusion: they talk of retreating at once."

"Let us ride, Volero," said Eutropius; "let us ride, in God's Name! this must not be. How far off is the Augustus, good fellow?"

"Not more than five hundred paces, my lord."

"Lead on, then!"

And to the tent of Theodosius we also are bound.

It lay about a hundred yards from the encampment in which the legions were even then

labouring. There was nothing to distinguish it from that of any other officer of rank, except that the silver *labarum* was pitched by it. The little meadow where it stood was occupied by a guard of a hundred picked men; they had kindled a fire of the boughs of the cork tree and the ilex, and its fitful gleam lighted up the calm, stern countenances of the soldiery, flashed on the dark armour of the guard, and showed the pale, careworn countenances of the going and the coming officers. Yes; and its glow fell unheeded on the autumn hedges, with their brown or scarlet tints, and on the autumn crocus and late harebells, with which the field was decked.

The middle of the tent was almost taken up by a long table; and at one end sat the emperor, the great Theodosius. He was then nearly sixty; a tall, hale man, though already showing signs of the over-fatigue and continued anxiety which, in the next year, brought on a fatal dropsy; an aquiline nose, a very bright eye, and a mouth, the compressed outline of which showed unflinching resolution of purpose. Below him were the various officers

of the army, chief among whom were the two generals, Timasius and Stilicho. At the lower end of the table the emperor's secretary made notes of the proceedings.

"We have waited, my lord," said Theodosius, with some little touch of impatience, as Eutropius entered.

"Sire," said the chamberlain, "I wished to procure what information I might of the strength of the enemy, and pushed on as far as the Cold River. I humbly crave pardon, if my absence has prevented business, or delayed it."

"Nay, my lord, we were sure it arose from zeal only. But to the point:—Bacurius and the Goths are totally defeated; that brave prince fell nobly. We learn that Arbogastes has despatched a strong guard to take possession of the passes; and what we must now determine is, whether to fall back instantly, and resume the war at a happier time,—or to stake all upon a single throw. You were speaking, excellent Stilicho."

"I am for retreat, my Lord Augustus," said that general; "I have lived long enough to

say so without fear. We are all but hemmed in ; between us and Italy lies the whole force of the rebels. If we attempt to force our way into Dalmatia, their lines on the Cold River are an insurmountable barrier. Even now, Arbogastes seeks to occupy—so we learn from our scouts—the defiles behind us : a sudden and speedy march can alone anticipate his purpose.”

The officers, almost to a man, agreed with him. One spoke of the fatigue that the royal troops had suffered ; another of the want of provisions, by which they had been weakened ; one dwelt on the superior numbers of the enemy ; another pointed out that the army of Eugenius was composed, for the most part, but of two nations,—Gauls, and the legions of Italy,—and that both were used to the warfare, and acquainted with the country in which they were engaged ; while the soldiers of Theodosius were a mixed multitude of Goths, Grecians, Phrygians, Arabians, Syrians, Iberians, strange to the country, strange to the climate, strange to the kind of war, strange to each other. They represented that the divided

empire of Eugenius and Arbogastes never could last; that the one would get rid of the other; that, if not, some other pretender to the purple would arise; and then would be the time for Theodosius, taking advantage of the division of his enemies, to crush them all.

Theodosius listened attentively to the opinions of the various speakers, though the flashing of his eye, and the manner in which he bit his lip, showed how little he agreed with their advice. When they had done,—“Now, Lord Chamberlain,” said he, “give us your counsel.”

“May it please your splendour,” said Eutropius, “I make no pretence, as these worthy officers, to military skill. I should take shame to myself if I were to give an opinion on any question connected with that. The little service I have been able to render your majesty has been that of a citizen. If, therefore, I say that my voice is against retreat, it is not because I can calculate the chances, as to men they seem, of battle. I firmly believe all that hath been said; that the enemy is more numerous, is better disciplined, is better provisioned

than we,—and that the kind of war and the nature of the country is in his favour. But, my Lord Augustus, it was not on such calculations that we made war. We felt, in the first place, that we were fighting the battles of the LORD of Hosts against the worshippers of idols; and we knew that with Him it is nothing to help, either with many, or with them that have no power. And then we had a prophecy from one of His saints, in which I, for my part, put unbounded trust; it was foretold us that the conflict would be a bloody one; but also it was foretold us that we should conquer. My voice, then, Lord Augustus, is for battle.”

“It is well said, brave Eutropius,” cried Theodosius. “God forbid that a Christian army should ever turn its back on a Pagan host! God forbid that the *labarum* should retreat before the standard of Hercules! My mind, sirs, is made up; to-morrow shall see me victorious, or no longer a monarch!”

“It is bravely spoken, sire,” replied Stilicho. “I spoke as I felt bound, knowing the enemy’s strength, and our own. But all that

art and courage can do to-morrow shall not be wanting on our part; and if your majesty fully trusts in the assurance given of victory, why then, in God's Name, so be it, and let us fall on!"

"At break of day, then," said the emperor, "let us descend the hill. The fourfold line of battle,—the reserve, of the Iberians. I ever love to follow the pattern of Cæsar."

"It shall be done, my liege," replied Stilicho. "And with your royal leave, I will betake me to the camp: the night will be all too short for what remains to be done."

"Good night, then, my lords all," said the emperor. "Eutropius, you will remain. We meet again here at the last hour of night."

That night Theodosius spent alone in a little oratory at the top of the hill. By the same rule that he looked for victory on the morrow, he looked also for death at no long time after the battle. He was earnest in prayer for the success of his just cause; for his children, for the empire, for his army, for the forgiveness of his past sins, and an entrance, at death, into the joy of his LORD. Towards five o'clock he

returned to his tent. The sky glittered with all its constellations, for the moon was down, and there was not as yet one line of grey to tinge the east. Just as the emperor received the obeisance of his guard, the distant cocks at Artenia began to crow. He entered the tent, flung himself as he was on his hard pallet, and slept.

In his dream he beheld two venerable-looking men, clothed in white, and mounted on white steeds. "At break of day," said they, "draw out your troops in line of battle; we are sent to your succour." "Who are you?" the emperor seemed to ask; and as they replied that they were the Apostles John and Philip, they vanished.

An hour later, and the council had met. The sun was not risen on the lowlands, but the mountain peaks were rosy with his light. The fresh breeze breathed gaily over the meadows, the birds sang their blithest, and the early insects sang their gayest. But all was gloom at the council board.

"My liege," said Timasius, "we must fight now for very life and death. Count Arbation

and the Gallic Velites occupy the heights behind us."

"Let the reserve be strengthened accordingly," said Theodosius. "Is this the plan of battle?" And he took a waxen tablet from the hand of Stilicho.

"With your approval, my liege," replied the general.

"We have done all that in us lay," said the emperor, after a pause, "and now safely may we leave it to God to do the rest. Let us out, lords, and speak to the troops."

Mounting then a horse that had been provided for him, he rode to the head of the army. The legions were drawn up in three lines, the reserve forming the fourth. High above the front rank flew the red flag, the signal of immediate action. Veterans were making the *military testament*, whereby they bequeathed their little all; centurions bringing ranks into line, or repressing them: small bodies of men falling in from the outposts; the last baggage being packed; here and there a warning note from the clarion. The royal army was on the brow of a long, steep hill;

the *antesignani* (the soldiers of the first rank) on its very edge. The plain below was dark with the forces of Eugenius; the silver eagle showed where the usurper's head quarters were; the standards of the cavalry floated gaily in the breeze; and here, too, the red flag was displayed in the front line. Behind, the next range of heights bristled with the Gallic auxiliaries, whom Count Arbëtion had marshalled against Theodosius.

Just as the emperor drew rein in front of the army, the sun rose behind the Julian Alps. A wild shout rolled from wing to wing, and from front to rear; Greek, Syrian, Arabian, Iberian, swelled the clamour; the trumpets blew up a royal flourish, and a moment after the clarions in the valley brayed out their counter defiance.

"Soldiers!" said Theodosius, when silence was made,—“God's soldiers no less than mine! the time forbids me to say more than these few words. You fight to-day under the banner of your lawful emperor,—of the prince that rightfully sits on the throne of Julius and Augustus, and Aurelius and the great Con-

stantine. You fight under the banner also of Him That is King of kings, and LORD of lords,—of Him That, by the mouth of His servant, has promised us an assured victory. You will revenge a foul murder; you will put down an abominable usurper; you will match your strength with the gods of the heathen, which are indeed no gods, but demons. I myself will lead you to your victory; I myself will reward you after your triumph. Centurions! raise the standards!”

One wild shout,—one peal of the trumpets,—and then Stilicho, riding past the line, said, “The word is, *audentior ito*,” (“advance more boldly:” it is part of a line in Virgil.)

“Hurrah, soldiers!” cried the centurion of the *antesignani*, as he raised the standard; “it comes up easy!” For it was a good omen if the eagles could be moved without difficulty.

“Forward!” thundered Stilicho: and the whole army charged down the slope, at what we should now call the Light Company’s pace; the *velites*, the skirmishers, being on the wings, and gradually pushing before the others. About half a mile before, the forces of Euge-

nus awaited the assault. Theodosius and one or two of his generals rode at the head of the army.

A kind of ravine lay in the way of the advancing troops. Infatuated in the belief of his superior numbers, Eugenius had neglected to occupy it. The two first lines forced their way through it without difficulty; the third was thrown into confusion by it, and unable to follow. The *hastati* and *principes*, seeing themselves unsupported, halted in some consternation at not more than a hundred paces from the enemy; and Arbogastes, seizing the moment, gave signal to charge. The emperor threw himself from his horse, advanced alone on foot, and cried with a loud voice, "Where is the God of Theodosius?"

The *hastati* rushed after him; and at the same moment the slingers and archers on both sides opened the assault. Suddenly, the sky darkened; the north wind rose; a black cloud rolled down from the Alps; the hurricane swept madly on; clouds of dust were dashed in the face of the rebels; their arrows were blown over their own army; while the troops of Theodosius, seeing that the God of the

elements was fighting on their side, rolled resistlessly onwards.

At that moment two horsemen rode up to the side of the emperor.

"My liege," said Eutropius, for he was one; "this is an officer of Count Arbation's. He offers you his instant service, if you will forgive the past, and receive him and his troops in their present rank."

"Such is my commission, sire," said the officer.

"Most surely I will," replied Theodosius. "You shall have the promise in my own hand. But what to write on?"

"Here are my tablets, my liege," said Eutropius.

In half an hour the auxiliaries of Count Arbation were fighting side by side with the royal forces; in an hour the rebels had thrown down their arms, and cried for mercy; in an hour and a half the head of Eugenius was on a pole, and Arbogastes a miserable fugitive among the mountains; in two hours the united armies had hailed Theodosius Emperor of the World.



Easter Tuesday.

THE DREAM OF TROILUS.

Circ. 590.

IT was Easter Tuesday. The good Bishop of Alexandria, John, (surnamed from his love to the poor, the Almoner,) had bidden the widows, the orphans, the halt, the maimed, of that great city to a banquet. In an open square before the palace there were long tables, that stretched from one side of the space to the other; there were benches enough to seat even that multitude; cooks and servitors were hastening from the kitchens of the Archbishop, and bearing joint after joint, loaf after loaf, vessel after vessel. The murmur of a thousand

voices rose at once ; and the poor and needy blessed God and their Patriarch.

In the midst of the feast John himself, with some of his friends, came forth from the palace. A kindly looking old man he was ; if wanting in the sternness and resolution which is necessary to a bishop in more troublous times, yet exceeding, perhaps, all other saints in his love to the poor, and beloved by them with a perfect intensity of feeling.

“Nay, be seated, be seated, good people,” he said : “I came not to interrupt your feast. Sit, I pray you, or I must go back again. Ah, Glyceria ! I am glad the physician hath, under God, done you so much good. And when expect you your son, good Chæremon ? Before Pentecost ? That’s well. Come to my house to-morrow, Sophronius ; I have somewhat to say that may advantage you. Well,” he continued, turning to a bishop who stood by him, “doth not your Blessedness think this a sight to make us old men young again ? Blessed be God Who put it into the heart of my predecessors and others the benefactors of this Evangelical See so to enrich it that

I can claim no merit in this almsdeed. Woe were me, if I hoarded for myself that which CHRIST's poor should have."

Troilus, for that was the name of the bishop, made some slight answer, and turned away.

"Doth not your Blessedness know," said Artemius, the *syncellus* (confidential deacon) of S. John, "that his Holiness Troilus hath no good report for almsdeeds. He hath, as I hear, brought no small scandal on his Church by faring sumptuously every day himself, while scarcely once a year doth he make some small present to the poor."

"Something of this had I heard before," replied John, "and it grieved me much. I must inquire further into this matter." "I will ask him to bestow some little gift, this blessed season, on the poor here."

"And that your Holiness may well do at once," said Artemius. "For I know that the Bishop hath even now thirty pieces of gold about him, with the which he intends to-morrow to buy somewhat at Demetrius the silversmith's: a chased silver dish, I think it was, for his table."

"Now God forgive him!" cried the good Bishop. "But I will give him the opportunity of amending his way."

The Patriarch presently crossed over to Troilus, who was standing at a little distance.

"My son," said he, (the Patriarch of Alexandria alone of all Patriarchs called bishops his *sons*, and it shows how exceedingly high was his rank,) "my son, it hath been told me that you have thirty pieces of gold, for which your Blessedness hath no immediate occasion. If that be so, though it be true that the treasures of this Church of Alexandria are great, yet are they not inexhaustible; and I fear me that the present day's entertainment will empty our coffers. Wherefore a most acceptable deed would it be to these poor, and to the God of these poor, if you, having no other occasion for this money, were willing to bestow it on them and on Him."

"I have indeed," said Troilus, endeavouring not to look annoyed—"I have indeed that sum with me; though I had intended to lay it out differently, but if your Holiness thinks—

I would say if the Church of Alexandria is in need—I mean if it seems well——”

“If it seems well that you, the Bishop of another see,” said John, ingeniously misunderstanding what Troilus really meant, “should bestow this sum on our flock? But look round on their number and their poverty, and let that plead for them.”

“I will bestow it then,” said Troilus, very unwillingly. “But I will not trouble your Holiness now with the sum: I will keep it till we go in.”

“Oh, I will call my steward,” replied the Patriarch. “Here, Onesiphorus! His Blessedness hath a sum of money for the poor of our Church; take you good care of it.”

The character of Troilus was well known; and as he took the purse which contained the money from the folds of his cassock, Onesiphorus looked at him in great amazement. But he merely bowed to the Bishop; and saying to John, “Your Holiness shall be obeyed,” went off on his business.

When the poor had feasted, the Patriarch was to give a banquet to the ecclesiastics of

the city. Troilus, who was staying at the palace, was of course one of the guests.

"Where is our good brother of Metelis?" inquired he of Artemias, as those who had been invited were assembling.

"He keeps his room, my father; he is grievous sick."

"Now God forbid!" cried the Patriarch. "But why do you smile?"

"In good sooth, my father, I believe that it is only vexation for his gold: so said the physician Eulogius, as I met him just now."

"Can it be possible," said John, "that any man's heart can be so set on such pelf? But come with me; if it be so, I will soon heal him."

The Patriarch left the hall, and proceeding through several passages and open courts, stopped at length at a door, where he knocked.

"My good brother," said he, seating himself at the bedside of Troilus, "can it be possible that the gift of your money so preys on your mind?"

Troilus made no answer.

"Nay, then," said John, "this must not

be. I have sent for the money to restore it to your Holiness; and as I think, I hear my deacon returning with it."

Artemius entered with a bag; and John, telling the money piece by piece on the table, said,

"Now, my brother, you shall give me a receipt for this sum, adding that the gift to the poor was mine, and not yours. Take my tablets, I pray you."

Troilus sat up in bed; and with a very well-pleased countenance, wrote as follows:—

"Know all men that I have this day received back again from my Lord John, Patriarch of the great city Alexandria, the sum of thirty pieces of gold, given by me to the poor of the said city. And I pray God to give the said Patriarch the reward of this his benefaction.

"At Alexandria, the sixteenth day of the month Bermuda, the year of martyrs, 306."

"I thank you," said John, "and I shall hope to see you anon at the banquet."

So saying, he left the room.

That night, as Troilus slept, he had a vision. He thought that he stood in a lovely country, where the fields were greener, and the flowers were brighter, than those of earth. Glittering forms passed and repassed; ever and anon unseen harps made blessed minstrelsy; and the Bishop perceived that, like S. Paul, he had been carried into Paradise. And now he thought that he stood before a glorious mansion; it was beautiful beyond the fancy of man:—the walls of snow-white marble; the lintels and mouldings set with diamonds and rubies; the door of solid gold. And, as he lifted up his eyes, over that door he saw this inscription:—

“THE ETERNAL MANSION AND REST OF TROILUS
THE BISHOP.”

Then did his heart burn within him, that this was one of the many dwellings of his FATHER’S house; that here he should live in company with the angels, and the blessed fellowship of just men made perfect; that here all tears would be wiped from his eyes, for in

this place should be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither should there be any more pain. Here, in the glory of God and the light of the LAMB, would be his portion for ever and ever.

While he thought on these things, two shining spirits drew near.

"The King," said the one, "commands thee to erase that title." And his companion did so.

"The King," continued he, "commands thee to write this in its place :—

"THE ETERNAL MANSION AND REST OF JOHN, ARCH-BISHOP OF ALEXANDRIA, WHICH HE BOUGHT FOR THIRTY PIECES OF GOLD."

And it was done as he gave order.

Then did the whole vision fade from the eyes of Troilus ; and with a start he awoke.

"Can it be," he said, "that thus the LORD makes good His word, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye did it unto Me?' Can it be that thus we make to ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness? Is it thus, that when we fail,

they will receive us into everlasting habitations?"

And ever from that time men said that, of all the Bishops in Egypt, next to the Patriarch John, the most charitable was Troilus of Metelis.



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